

Miljenko Pandžić

Hrvatski državni arhiv
Marulićev trg 21
Zagreb

**SOME EXPERIENCES and PROBLEMS CONCERNING
PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL LITERARY
HERITAGE – DISASTER PREVENTION
INCLUDING ARMED CONFLICTS***

UDK 930.251

Stručni članak

Autor u članku prikazuje rad i nastanak Odbora Međunarodnoga arhivskog vijeća za preventivnu zaštitu arhivske građe kao pisane povijesne i kulturne baštine, u slučaju prirodne katastrofe ili ratnih sukoba. Navodi i primjere uništavanja te oštećivanja arhivske građe u ratu u Hrvatskoj, kao i u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Introductory notes

RECOMMENDATIONS of the XIIth International Congress on Archives (held in Montreal, Canada, Québec, 6-11 September 1992, Proceedings published in *Archivum*, vol. XXXIX, pp. 479-481) among other chapters, in point 22, under the title "PROTECTION OF THE ARCHIVAL HERITAGE", summon up the general feeling that too many archives, too many national, cultural literary documents of permanent value are jeopardized, in great danger or "at risk" or burned down or totally destroyed, primarily because

* Ovaj tekst predan je kao izvješće 1993. za INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF ARCHIVES (ICA) – COMMITTEE ON DISASTER PREVENTION.

of too many local or regional or international armed conflicts or wars that are more and more raging, though along with many other natural disaster, also jointly with them, but primarily, nevertheless, the armed conflicts, throughout on our planet Earth. These armed conflicts or wars are nowadays, more and more threatening our civilisation and culture. The Congress expressed the feelings of present archivists from all over the world, in this manner:

”PROTECTION OF THE ARCHIVAL HERITAGE

22. The two thousand five hundred archivists meeting in Montreal at the XIIth International Congress on Archives, reaffirming their pledge to preserve the archival heritage of mankind, and distressed by the widespread ordeal of war and combat, which jeopardizes the integrity of archives and subjects them to destruction, disarrangement and capture, urge ICA:

- to prepare specific plans and publications to assist governments in preventing damage to archives in the event of war and natural disaster;
- to urge members to take timely actions to protect threatened archives;
- to cooperate with members and national and international bodies in efforts to reconstitute destroyed information from archives” (*Archivum* XXXIX, 481).

In the second item of these Recommendations you can read ”armed conflicts or natural disaster”, so I am taking the liberty being in the war, in my country in Croatia, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina – to say a few words more, about this specific but also ominously permanently and latently present in the world, so that I can dare to say that there is so many risk almost in every country in the world, simply because of really huge storage of every kind of weapons throughout the world.

On the ground of these above mentioned Recommendations the Committee on Disaster Prevention of the International Council on Archives (ICA – DpC) – was organized.

The first meeting of the Committee was held in Stockholm/Helsinki in October 1993. The Committee recognised the need to advise on Disaster Control Planning using a world-wide perspective, taking into account the present recognised risks including the problems associated with armed conflict, presently highlighted by experiences in former Communist ruled countries of Eastern and South-East Europe, as well as in regions of Eastern and South-East Asia, and other countries of the Third World. It is generally recognized by Committee members that international developments in Europe have highlighted the need for concern over loss resulting from armed conflict. The meeting was also presented with details from many experiences from recent war events in Republics of the former Yugoslavia (especially Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) where many cultural monuments, archival materials and buildings have been deliberately targeted, for various reasons. Reference was made to the of the 1954 Hague Convention and concern expressed about inadequacies of the treaty.

It was generally accepted that action on the provision of disaster control advice should be taken in collaboration with ICA, IFLA and UNESCO. It is clear that there are many concerns in common with ICA and IFLA, and, while prevention measures would be very similar for archival material as well as for libraries, reaction and recovery techniques could differ.

The Committee's objective was defined as planning counter measures for "natural and man-made disasters, including armed conflict". Disaster itself was defined as "an event whose timing is unexpected and whose consequences are seriously destructive". Causes of such disaster were identified as: "fire, flood, earthquake, tsunami, tidal wave, hurricane, landslip, adverse weather, explosion, building design, armed conflict, electromagnetic forces, electronic sabotage". Although these are mainly natural events, disasters often result from the mistakes of mankind and are therefore preventable. Armed conflict was identified as a threat causing particular concern and the cause of many incidents of heavy loss of national heritage material. This concern was the reason for a statement made by the committee concerning the particular risk to many archives. The Committee stated that "an attempt to destroy cultural identity through the destruction of cultural property should be condemned. The Committee urges the ICA Executive to act with UNESCO and other international organizations to provide protection through the condemnation of such acts, and for action against those guilty of the deliberate action of cultural and historical property".

Some actual experiences and problems concerning disaster prevention with a special regard in case of armed conflict or war

Although we are dealing generally with all natural and man-made disasters, after the publications of an excellent RAMP Study written by S. Buchanan ("Disaster planning; preparedness and recovery for libraries and archives", Paris 1988, PGI-88/WS/6), it is intended to focus more on disaster prevention including damage and loss of archival and library materials, resulting from armed conflict, presently highlighted by current events in parts of the world and some recent events and experiences in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

1. After World War II, and especially in the last few years, armed conflicts has threatened cultural materials of many nations in the world. Those responsible for the organisation, care and preservation of record repositories have special concern for archives as a literary heritage and a memory of mankind.

In some conflicts – as in the Republic of Croatia and even more in Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina – there are many examples of cultural institutions, sacred objects, monuments, archives and libraries being destroyed on purpose to apply sophisticated "ethnical cleansing" and psychological pressure against an "enemy nation". This deliberate targeting is of special concern.

2. Although international legislation system exists in the form of treaties (the most important are 3 Conventions, Hague 1954, Paris 1970 and 1972), and is generally

accepted by more than 60 countries, there have been many violations in the latest war events in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and it has been clearly shown that monuments of culture, archives and libraries, especially sacred monuments and graveyards, can be the target of planned violence. New international legal procedures, extensions and legal mechanisms are needed in order to put pressure on aggressive forces, to stop destroying the cultural heritage of nations.

3. Such war experiences have shown the need for countermeasures, some of which have been well voiced as a result of experiences of armed conflict or war throughout the world. These are as follows:

a) Preparing inventories: cataloguing of the most valuable archival material (collections and record groups as well as analytical listing of the most precious units). In order to implement this cataloguing it is necessary to create specific standards and recommendations to all member countries, to help this action to be adopted throughout the world.

b) Large scale microfilming: A special priority listing (part of the catalogue) should list the most important and precious national and international cultural heritage items, the "memory of the world", as defined by UNESCO, and/or other special valuable national material. Also the very important items, such as the inventory books of museums, of archives, catalogues of libraries, cultural, religious and other institutions. Specific standard lists of archival material "at risk" should be made generally available through all member states.

c) Evacuation: When possible, evacuation and transportation of important and valuable archives (record groups and/or collections), according to a carefully laid plans made in advance. Account should be taken of all the dangers the archival material may be subjected to in new or temporary repositories, during the transportation itself, including transportation back to the original institution after the war. In World War II there were cases in which more archival material was damaged or destroyed during the transportation, or in new repositories, than when it had been left in situ. This does not mean archives should not be temporarily resited, rather that any movement should be carried out within carefully laid plans.

We are now well aware of the need to secure specific buildings with space and safe conditions to accept archival material on a temporary basis. Because of the dangerous humidity resulting with moulds in inadequate repositories, we should have concern for microclimates, water proof containers and secure vehicles.

4. Conservation and restoration needs should be continuously assessed to take account of the rapidly growing amount of damaged archival material, both that which exists and that which results from the armed conflicts which will need tending when the conflict ceases.

In Croatia alone after two and a half years of armed conflict it is calculated that some 500 000 leaves of paper (archival documents) have been heavily damaged, physically, by water, humidity, or soiled by faeces (being hidden for example in stables or other places). This adds to conservation problems associated with around 10 million leaves of archival

documents in Croatia identified as needing restoration and conservation treatment from damage before the war began. The Central Laboratory for Restoration and Conservation in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb has already restored much archival material from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in Croatia, the total expertise amounts to only 11 experts in conservation laboratories.

5. All the actions mentioned in parts 3 and 4 (investing in microfilming, transportation, restoration and conservation, as well as other preventive actions as custody, permanent if possible, of repositories, archival buildings and other cultural institutions, fire prevention measures, acquiring the necessary equipment for laboratories and other emergency equipment or supplies) should be adopted as policy. All plans and requirements should be prepared carefully and precisely, and, in written form, distributed among the relevant institutions.

At national level, one official body should be nominated as official coordinator of all actions. In Croatia it is the Institute for Preservation of Cultural Monuments at the Ministry for Education and Culture, in Zagreb.

6. Criteria for prioritising archival record groups and collections, could be as follows:

a) creator of the record group (fond d'archives, Bestand), its role and significance in his time, in historical perspective, in a country (its importance as part of a national heritage).

b) date limits (being important for the valuation of historical events and archival documents as historical sources) and location of record, for historical context of an archival document as a historical source.

c) level of archival integrity of fragmentation.

d) uniqueness of archival material (in a record group or in a collection, or of some special value).

e) representative value.

f) other special value (international, national or regional).

7. Considering above mentioned criteria (6, a–f), archival material could be ranked (evaluated) in the following categories:

a) Archival material of the highest national cultural heritage (significance), but at the same time being of international value and perhaps entered in a list under special custody of UNESCO, sometimes called 'the Memory of the World'.

b) Archival material with emphasis on representative value for national archival integrity or of national cultural heritage value, for fundamental research – being of special value.

c) Archival material of value for broader regions of a country, being important for a large field of scientific research or generally for the history of a nation. Its most important data are already identified in categories a. and b.

d) Archives of little value for small areas inside a country or a town, for research of local history (basic information is already contained in categories a. and c).

e) A local Category for archival documents of minor or little value to a town, village or local personalities, of local value, that could be preserved in copies. These materials are often in great danger!

8. Collaboration and co-operation at international, national, regional and local level is desirable and necessary if we wish to help members of ICA confront the risk associated with disasters, including armed conflict where there is a danger of losing whole archives, as has happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Sarajevo an internationally known and valuable collection of some 20,000 or 30,000 oriental manuscripts has been destroyed, many monastery archives and other church archives of all confessions (Moslem, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish) have been the victims of the war. In Sarajevo the Jewish museum was heavily damaged, perhaps totally destroyed, as was the Library of the Bosnian University and the whole Mostar Archives of Herzegovina as well as the bishop's library. In Croatia, many towns such as Vukovar together with about 500 small towns and villages have been either totally destroyed or heavily damaged. Old cities like Zadar, known in Roman times, and Šibenik (Sebenico) with many medieval monuments, have also suffered. Even now (in Eastern Slavonia, Croatia on the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina) bombardment and fighting is still going on. Many record offices, school archives and libraries, church archives and other archival institution (Dubrovnik, Osijek, Karlovac, Vukovar, Vinkovci) have been destroyed or damaged, one third of the territory of Croatia is still under occupation and it is still not possible to estimate the total value of the damage and loss. It seems that there are similar situations in other regions of Europe, Cambodia, in Asia and Africa which are at war or facing the possibility of armed conflict.

In the last issue of *Informatica museologica* published in Zagreb (in 1993) by the Museum Documentation Centre, under the title "War destruction of Cultural Heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina", there can be seen in a short but impressive article "Destruction of Multicultural City: Sarajevo", by Nina Pirnat Spahić, some general statistical data about damaged or destroyed important administrative, cultural business or religious buildings, each having some valuable historical or contemporary documentation, archival or library material. 41 administrative buildings, 13 cultural institutions, 21 faculties, 31 primary schools, 12 high schools, 56 Islamic religious buildings, 11 Catholic religious buildings, 4 Serbian orthodox religious buildings, 3 Jewish religious buildings, all of them in Sarajevo, are known to be affected up to 1992. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 760 Mosques, 250 Islamic primary and high schools, 6 monasteries, 7 mausoleums (Islamic) and 56 Catholic religious buildings are also affected. The count is probably higher but further statistics are not available at this time. (See also *Croatia-Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sacral Institutions on Target*; Some Moslem estimations are going up to 1000 damaged or destroyed Sacral buildings in this war.)

The TV Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo is "likely to be either badly damaged or totally destroyed". Branko Bubenik, head of Croatian TV Archive in Zagreb,

has suggested action trying to take the initiative in helping to reconstruct TV archival material or audio-visual material from other stations in Europe and elsewhere. To gather these material for some future recovery of Sarajevo TV Archive. Since other archives could become a victim of such incidents, he proposes some recommendations to help the TV Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina which may be used as a framework for TV Archives in other parts of the world facing similar risks. These are as follows.

- Lists of the AV documents containing war material from Bosnia, produced by their "parent" TV station, should be made by all archives. After the war the material should be given to the TV archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- Copying should be allowed free of charge after the selection of the relevant AV material. In this case the Bosnian TV archives should not sell material thus obtained.

- Cassettes with recorded war material could be donated by the more prosperous TV archives.

- The appropriate format would be arranged with the recipient TV archive.

- Special attention should be given to the news services such as ITN, CNN, WTN, Reuters etc, whose reporters from Bosnia have produced some brilliant war coverage. Valuable assistance could be received from these companies.

- The representatives of the world organisation of FIAT/IFTA could visit the archives which have suffered to ascertain ways and means of providing help judged from first hand experience.

- Appeal for rescue funds should be launched and appeals made to UNESCO and the world manufacturers of video material and television equipment.

- Colleagues from the affected archives should be able to attend professional seminars free of charge, organised by the more developed archives in neighbouring countries (RAI or ORE, in this case).

Up to 1993, the Czech TV Archives from Prague has responded positively to appeals made by the TV Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the meanwhile a worldwide action was organized by Unesco for protection of cultural literary heritage under the title "Memory of the world". They have had a meeting in Pultusk (near Warszawa), Poland in 1993, and in this year the organizer has sent to all member states of ICA a questionnaire asking for precise statistical data on all losses and damages on archival and other literary material, on whatever place it was kept, from the very beginning of 20th c. up to nowadays. Also every representative of the states has given on the meeting last year in Poland, a list with the concise data of the most precious archival literary material of highest international or national category of its value.

Such a survey, on a world scale, both of the most precious archival literary heritage as well as of the heaviest losses and damages in this century, can give us the necessary perspective view of the problem, so to be in better possibility to help the governments in their pursuit of protecting their national, cultural values, naturally also of some international value and also on whatever media it can be (audiovisual and other).

It should be understood that many losses and damages have been made also by transporting the precious archival material in an another country or just in another center of power, other than where the archives has been created, on the provenance principle. That could be done and has been done by force, we have too many examples, in all countries, in all centuries, past and present, that it has been done by force. By military force or other, like administrative force, by rough and forcible centralisation, like e.g. in former Soviet Union, or by occupant forces, or by political powers, e.g. by Nazi or communist governments, or any other undemocratic or genocide, culturocide action.

On the other side, the archivists and archival services throughout the world with other democratic and cultural forces, should be always in action to p r e v e n t such annihilation, and protect the archives by all means, however could it possibly be!

A well known handbook of Sally Buchanan, under the title "Disaster Planning: Preparedness and Recovery for Libraries and Archives", with a good bibliography (by Toby Murray), was published as a RAMP study inside General Information Programme and UNISIST (Unesco, Paris, 1988), still has only a small contribution about war danger and preparedness for danger and damages in armed conflicts whatever their kind could be. So it seems to me suitable on the end of this paper, to point out for another comprehensive study or handbook, written by an Austrian author Hans Foramitti in a series of studies published by an Austrian official body "Bundesdenkmalamt" (Federal bureau for the protection of monuments of culture, published by Bohlau (Verlag) Wien-Kln, 1970). The title of this work in three volumes is PROTECTION of MONUMENTS of CULTURE ("KULTURGUTERSCHUTZ"). The whole second volume (310 pages) is dedicated to the jeopardized monuments of culture endangered in the war or by fire ("Gefährdung der Kulturgüter durch Waffenwirkung und Brand"). Very good compiled bibliography includes also some works dealing with possibility and danger of a nuclear war. It seems to me that such a work and similar ones are also necessary in this moment of world history.

Some further suggestions and conclusions are, as follows:

a) That a list be made of the most important archival institutions in countries which are considered to be at risk or in some danger. This should be a worldwide scheme, perhaps for all countries except those in highly developed areas of Western Europe, North America and Japan.

b) The creation of instructions or recommendations for creating standard inventariation.

c) Because of inadequacies in the Hague Convention of 1954, new international legislation, procedures and mechanisms should be drawn up to protect cultural property during armed conflict.

d) Countries at risk should be persuaded to form comprehensive lists of their archival material of highest, or of high value (according to the criteria in part 6) for

categorisation and evacuation. These criteria should be standardised internationally, revised at intervals, and recommended to all member states of ICA. Similar lists were proposed for East and Middle European countries at a recent meeting (September 1993) in Pultusk (Poland) organised by UNESCO, under the title "MEMORY of the WORLD". This should eventually be done in many other countries, to form a worldwide plan. Such a catalogue or list can be made only with basic data (name of record group or collection of archival material, data limit, institution or place where this archival material is in custody and the quantity in linear metres).

e) FUNDING – It is proposed that an appeal for internal and international sponsorship for security microfilming, restoration and conservation, for equipment, supplies, education and other disaster related needs be established.

Sažetak

NEKA ISKUSTVA I PROBLEMI U SVEZI S OČUVANJEM NACIONALNE PISANE BAŠTINE – PREVENTIVNA ZAŠTITA OD KATASTROFA UKLJUČUJUĆI ORUŽANE SUKOBNE

U svijetu sve više jača svijest o ugroženosti čitavog čovječanstva, a posebno kulturne i pisane baštine, tog pamćenja ili "memorije naroda". Da postoji opasnost njenog potpunog ili djelomičnog uništenja, pokazala su i aktualna ratna zbivanja u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini, kao rezultat sulude politike nekih imperijalističkih grupa te njihovih nastojanja da potpuno etnički "očiste" određena područja na kojima žive i pripadnici "neprijateljske nacije".

Sadašnji rat na našim prostorima, kao i drugi slični ratovi (u Vijetnamu, Kambodži, Ruandi i drugdje), pokazuju da su takve opasnosti poprimile svjetske razmjere te da postoje tendencije daljnjeg proširenja na gotovo sve zemlje svijeta.

Svjesni dobro takve opasnosti, osobito za arhivsku dokumentaciju, sudionici XII. Međunarodnog arhivskog kongresa, održanog u Montru (Kanada) od 6. do 11. rujna 1992, donose posebne *Preporuke za zaštitu arhivske baštine*. Svrha tih Preporuka je što bolje organiziranje sustavne "pomoći vladama kako bi spriječile uništenje arhiva u slučaju rata ili prirodne katastrofe" (*Archivum*, vol. XXXIX, Paris 1994, 479-481, toč. 22; prijevod Preporuka, *Arhivski vjesnik*, god. 36, Zagreb 1993, 234).

Radi bolje pripreme zaštite arhivskoga gradiva na svjetskoj razini, Međunarodno arhivsko vijeće osnovalo je Odbor za preventivnu zaštitu od katastrofa (ICA, Committee on Disaster Prevention).

Autor u članku navodi najvažnije stručne i organizacijske poslove što ih arhivi trebaju poduzeti radi zaštite arhivskoga gradiva u slučaju prirodnih i ratnih katastrofa. Prva je zadaća popisivanje – inventariziranje arhivskoga gradiva (osnova za kasniju

identifikaciju i dokumentaciju o eventualnim štetama ili uništenju), zatim mikrosnimanje gradiva (u svrhu zaštite, ali i kao zamjena za uništeno ili oštećeno gradivo) i konačno, premještanje arhivskoga gradiva iz područja zahvaćenih ratom ili prirodnom katastrofom. Gradivo se premješta u zaštićena područja u zemlji, ali često i izvan nje. Pritom postoji velika opasnost od dodatnih oštećenja gradiva tijekom prijenosa ili smještanja u neodgovarajuće prostore (nepovoljniji mikroklimatski uvjeti, vlaga i sl.).

U nastavku teksta autor navodi više primjera uništenja i teških oštećenja arhiva i arhivskoga gradiva, nastalih tijekom rata u Hrvatskoj te Bosni i Hercegovini. U Hrvatskoj su stradali brojni veoma vrijedni župni, samostanski, školski, općinski i povijesni arhivi, a posebno arhivske zgrade u Osijeku, Slavonskom Brodu, Dubrovniku i Petrinji. U Bosni i Hercegovini najteža razaranja pogodila su Institut za orijentalistiku u Sarajevu (potpuno uništena zbirka orijentalnih rukopisa), Univerzitetsku biblioteku također u Sarajevu te Arhiv Hercegovine i Knjižnicu biskupije u Mostaru. Spomenuti su i mnogi drugi primjeri, posebno oni navedeni u časopisu *Informatica museologica*, br. 23, 1992. te u priručniku za zaštitu kulturnih dobara, autora H. Foramitija, poznatog austrijskog konzervatora.