

Continued from the March 28th edition

# BOZIDAR M. MARKOVICH:

A Remembrance on the 30th Anniversary of His Death  
By Olga B. Markovich

A staunch patriot, Markovich enlisted in the Serbian Army on November 1, 1910—two years before he was due to be called up. He served for eighteen months until May 1, 1912 when he was honorably discharged as a sergeant.

Full of life and vitality and eager to see the world, he left Serbia on July 14, 1912 for his land of opportunity—Canada. Like many Serbian immigrants he would take his first steps on the soil of the New World in Quebec City on August 10, 1912. Three days later he arrived in Toronto, a city he was to love and call home for 58 years. Bozidar Markovich's life in Canada is so closely woven with the Canadian Serbian community from 1912 to 1970 that it is impossible to separate them.

Between the Balkan Wars and before the Great War there were more than 200 Serbs living in Toronto. The Beograd Restaurant at the corner of King St. E. and Trinity was the only Serbian meeting place in 1912. It is hard to imagine anyone visiting or passing through Toronto in the second decade of the 20th century who did not drop in for black coffee and a chat with his countryman. Among those who first met his fellow Serbs at the Beograd Restaurant was Bozidar Markovich.

## Community Activities

From that day in August 1912 his forthrightness and his gift for making friends were to involve him in every organizational facet of the Serbian community. His integrity and leadership quality, plus his ability to determine the pulse of people, were to serve him well. He never at any time questioned himself or his future—confidence was his keynote at all times. His life and work in the Serbian community were one. He regarded his Serbian activities as a sacred duty. He wrote about his sense of duty in this way: "We must not turn away from our duties in an organization. Many times individuals, when they are nominated to serve in an organization's executive capacity, will give the 'excuse' that they cannot accept because they are too busy with their personal matters. In this way they are abandoning their patriotic duty which is much more important than personal and private matters. If the citizens of a country were to do this when bugle call is sounded then we wouldn't have a country, freedom or a nation. Indifference is worse than any illness." (Voice of Canadian Serbs July 20, 1954)

The WWI years were to see the organization beginnings of the Toronto Serbian community. Serbia as overrun by enemy forces and the country was in dire need of assistance. This led to the formation of a Serbian Red Cross Committee in Toronto which collected money for the Serbian war orphans and wounded. On July 17, a meeting was held in the Beograd Restaurant to re-organize the Serbs into one unit which would collect financial assistance for the Serbian Relief Fund. This resulted in the formation of the first Srpska Narodna Odbrana branch in Canada. Bozidar M. Markovich was elected president. Shortly after, other branches were quickly formed across Canada. The first SNO convention took place in Welland, Ontario at the beginning of August 1916. Branches from across Canada sent delegates to this first large gathering of Canadian Serbs to select a national executive board on which Bozidar Markovich was to serve as secretary. A financial statement of the Srpska Narodna Odbrana in Canada published in the Srpski Dnevnik in New York on January 12, 1920 reveals that from its formation in 1916 until January 1, 1920 the Canadian SNO was successful in raising \$8,100.75. When one considers that the men in Canada were only earning 25 cents an hour in those days, this is a commendable sum. Donations came from the heart for their war-waged brethren.

During the First World War the Serbian community in Toronto was very active. In 1916, Chedomilj Mijatovich, the former Serbian Minister to the Court of St. James, while on a lecture tour of Canada, visited the community and wrote his Memories of a Balkan Diplomatist: "I was pleasantly surprised to find in beautiful Toronto a happy and prosperous Serb colony. A kind Anglican minister had placed his large schoolroom at their disposal (the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse 1848 on Trinity Street) and they arranged a special Serb meeting to be addressed by me. I was delighted to address so many men and women from my own country—intelligent, patriotic and loving Canada."

The Srpska Narodna Odbrana also played a prominent role in recruiting volunteers to the Salonica Front as by 1917 the Serbian Army was in dire need of assistance. Since the United States was not yet at war, Colonel Milan Pribicevic came to Canada where he immediately contacted the Canadian government and advised them of his aim of recruiting volunteers for the Serbian Army. He advised the authorities that the volunteers needed a place where they could have basic training before being sent to the battlefields of Europe. All their training and traveling expenses would be paid by Serbia. The Canadian authorities gave him permission to set up a Serbian Mobilization Camp at Levis, Quebec.

Shortly thereafter, Pribicevic arrived in Toronto where the Srpska Narodna Odbrana branch called a special meeting in the Beograd Restaurant. He spoke for over two hours about the situation in Serbia, the purpose of his visit to Canada and the United States as the great necessity of recruiting volunteers for the Serbian Army. The brother of Markovich's future wife, Milica) who was later killed in action in southern Serbia, Markovich also volunteered, but on Pribicevic's urging agreed to be appointed as the representative of the Serbian War Mission in Toronto. His duty was to meet the volunteers from the US and Canada who were passing through the city and to send them on to the Serbian Mobilization Camp. Markovich performed this duty on a voluntary basis until October 28, 1918 when he handed his duties over to Sergeant-Major Lazar Dzeletovic who handled it for the short weeks remaining until the Armistice was signed November 11th. Thousands of volunteers from the US and Canada joined the Allied forces in Salonica and before the Armistice won back every mile and village of their fatherland.

In 1919 Markovich, as representative of the Srpska Narodna Odbrana, was instrumental in obtaining the release of Serbs who had been interned during the war years as enemy aliens in the Kapuskasing Camp.

## Post-War Years

Bozidar Markovich organized the first post-war meeting held in Toronto on April 10, 1927. It resulted in the formation of the fraternal lodge "Plavi Jadran" affiliated with the Srpski Savez Srdabija which later merged with the Serb National Federation. Since the SNF is more than an insurance organization, the formation of the lodge initiated an era of social activities in Toronto: concerts, dances, theatrical performances, St. Sava celebrations and picnics. It was the first organization to promote the Serbian cultural heritage in Toronto. At the 1931 SNF convention held in Pittsburgh, PA Bozidar Markovich, as president and delegate of the Plavi Jadran Lodge, was elected to the SNF Board of Trustees. He was the first Canadian to be elected to the SNF Supreme Council and served on it for 35 years as secretary to the Board of Trustees and in later years as a member of the SNF Supreme Trial Board.

In its issue of February 22, 1934, the Yugoslav Herald, official organ of the Slovenian-Croatian Union, reported that King Alexander I of Yugoslavia had awarded the Order of St. Sava V Rank to Bozidar Markovich of Toronto. The paper writes: "This high honor from the highest station of our homeland recognizes Mr. Markovich's untiring work in national and cultural fields. Mr. Markovich who resided in Canada for over 20 years, has always and on every occasion remained a staunch nationalist and champion of our national unity." Years later Markovich was to receive the Order of St. Sava IV Rank from King Peter II and in 1952 the Coronation Medal from Queen Elizabeth II for his community work.

## Publisher & Editor

The eventful years of the 1930's were to bring to the forefront Bozidar Markovich's "sense of mission" which was to exhibit itself through his pen. By then he had already contributed many articles to the Srpski Dnevnik and the American Srdobran in Pittsburgh, PA. In the middle of the Depression when jobs were scarce and worth their weight in gold, Bozidar Markovich quit his job as supervisor at the T. Eaton Company in order to start a weekly newspaper Glas Kanade/Voice of Canada. In all his endeavors he was helped by his wife Milica - Mitza (the couple were married September 10, 1921) - who very carefully proof-read each issue of the newspaper, maintained its circulation list and made sure it was mailed on time every Wednesday.

In the newspaper's first issue which was published on December 27, 1934 its publisher and editor, B.M. Markovich, stated the newspaper's purpose: "Often, very often, the voice of our people could not be heard. We felt that we should raise our voice—but we were silent—because we didn't have our newspaper in

Canada through which we could speak, through which we could open our hearts and souls, through which we could express our thoughts" (Glas Kanade, December 27, 1934)

The year was 1934—the midst of the Depression—when the Serbs, especially those in small town and mining settlements, were beset on all sides with the propaganda urging them to forget their Serbian democratic heritage. There was a strong desire to exchange views, to warn each other of the dangers of fascism and communism and to preserve their traditions and culture. The Glas had been a crusader from its first issue when it raised its voice for democracy and freedom. Markovich's journalistic work, filled with passion, emotion and intensity, was a crusader's call to arms. He was determined to warn of the dangers ahead and to prepare his readers for the great ordeal of another World War which awaited them. He was determined to carry out his mission regardless of the sacrifices he would have to make so that he could help preserve humanity from the dark forces, the tyranny of blood and hatred. Not even threats from the 1940s communist cells that his only child would be kidnapped if he did not stop publishing the Glas would deter him from his path. Markovich was convinced that what he was doing would prove valuable to the Serbs, to his country Canada and to the freedom of the world.

For Markovich, democracy was a way of life and in 1938 he wrote what it meant to him: "Democracy is government of the people. The people must first be free in order to govern themselves. According to this, democracy is freedom. For what has our nation fought for centuries? It has fought for freedom—meaning it has fought for democracy. For generations we have fought for freedom—for generations we have fought for democracy." (Glas Kanade, June 23, 1938)

During this period Markovich felt that the greatest menace to the world were poisoned words and ideals and the retreat from individual freedom. He believed that the 20th century was not engaged in a mere ideological struggle to be fought with words but that the struggle demanded moral decisions and actions. In 1940 he wrote: "Today we live in dangerous times. Today dangerous winds are blowing on all sides. Today our national candle proudly burns. That candle was lit by our glorious past which passed that holy flame to us to preserve it on to the coming generations. That is why the Glas exists" (Glas Kanade, January 18, 1940)

Five years later Markovich would write: "For the last ten years our national newspaper did not know any compromise in the preservation and honor of the Serbian people. It was started because of the people and for the people. We did not, for one moment, think to stray from our national path. Through hardships and storms we carried our promised idea. We could only do this, with our Serbian people who were the backbone of this newspaper. Even though we gave all we could for the good of the Serbian people through this newspaper—there is someone who gave much more—our readers and contributors—those Kosovo Serbs and Jugovic mothers. They are the ones who determined the direction of this newspaper and the editor was here not to command the newspaper he edited but to listen to the heartbeat of the Serbian people and to direct the newspaper accordingly. Otherwise, without the people who are an inestimable force, the editor would be a straw in the wind. That is why our newspaper always carries on its first page the words: "With the people, for the people" (Voice of Canadian Serbs, Jan. 11-18, 1945)

Glas Kanade/Voice of Canada changed its name to Glas Kanadskih Srba/Voice of Canadian Serbs on January 6, 1944. Markovich remained the paper's publisher and editor until October 13, 1946 when it came under the auspices of the Srpska Narodna Odbrana/Serbian National Shield Society of Canada. Over the years Markovich had been one of the founding members of the organization, its secretary, organizer, vice-president and president.

In 1948 Bozidar Markovich was one of the founders and first president of the Serbian Home and Church Association whose aim was to build the first Serbian Orthodox Church in Toronto, the forerunner of the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church Congregation whose president he remained until his death in 1970.

Bozidar Markovich's strong beliefs and principles forged him into a fighter for truth and justice, democracy and freedom. He always looked resolutely ahead with his head held high in the face of all odds and never once faltered in his beliefs. He loved his Serbian heritage and was prepared to sacrifice all he had for its preservation and for the preservation of freedom and democracy. He simply believed that men and women should be free to decide their own fate. His guiding principles were: the preservation of the Serbian Orthodox faith and national traditions in his adopted country, and uncompromising battle with the forces of tyranny which he considered the greatest evil of contemporary mankind; and the cultivation and elevation of the principles of democracy, self-government and constitutional monarchy.

On one occasion, Bozidar Markovich revealed his feelings about his community work. At the consecration of the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church in Toronto in 1955 he concluded his speech with these words: "I am satisfied and honored and proud to be in your company, in the company of brothers and sisters who always create, erect, and build. Always remain that way. And in the future, raise even higher the flag of Serbianism and our Orthodox faith" (Voice of Canadian Serbs, June 2, 1955)

On Sunday May 10, 1970—two days after his Krzna Slava St. Mark—Bozidar Markovich attended church services at the St. Sava Church and later was present at the founding meeting of the Canadian Serbian Club of Toronto/Srpsko Kanadsko Udruzenje which was meeting to establish a Serbian radio program. He suggested that the radio hour should be called ISumadija! A few hours later, at home, he lay down for an afternoon nap and died in his sleep. Radio Sumadija, which bears the name Bozidar Markovich gave it, is marking its 30th anniversary of broadcasting on May 30, 2000.

Among his papers were found these handwritten words: "Do not create any memorials for me; I have paid my debt to Srpsivo during my lifetime and now, I only owe my soul to God"



## SERB NATIONAL FEDERATION 100th ANNIVERSARY AD BOOK

The Serb National Federation will be observing its 100th anniversary in July. In conjunction with anniversary celebrations, a commemorative ad book will be published. All SNF Lodges, all Serbian Orthodox Churches and Serbs ever where are urged to support this cause by purchasing an ad. Lodges are encouraged to include a brief history of their lodge and a current listing of officers. Churches are welcome to send congratulatory messages. Additionally, individuals can submit memorial ads for deceased family members.

Pricing for ads to be published in the book, which will be approximately 5 1/2 by 8 inches in size:

- \$250 for inside and outside cover
- \$100 for a full page ad with an additional \$25 charge for picture
- \$60 for a half-page ad
- \$10 for a booster ad, name only

Deadline for receipt of ads is April 30, 2001, to ensure publication will be complete in time for the July celebration.

Ads should be sent to: the Serb National Federation, Attention: Ad book committee One Fifth Ave., Seventh Floor Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

Make checks payable to SNF 100th Anniversary Cultural Fund. We encourage widespread participation in this effort to help make the SNF centennial a success.

Please be a part of this historic occasion.

Centennial Ad Book Committee

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