

History of Serb Settlers In Canada

ORGANIZATION OF SNO

PART III

By OLGA MARKOVICH

THE work of the Serbian Red Cross was hindered because it didn't have enough branches in Canada. In the United States the Serbian Nat'l Defense had been organized and was both active and powerful in helping the cause for Serbian freedom. Ergo, the Serbs in Canada decided to follow in the American-Serbs' footsteps.

In July 1916, Gajo Vasiljevich of Welland, publisher of Serbian paper "Kanadski Glasnik," took the initiative in effecting the organizing of the Srpska Narodna Odbrana in Toronto.

For the historic meeting, in the "Beograd" restaurant, Mr. Vasiljevich brought with him the copies of the first Serbian newspaper in Canada. With him were Michun Pavichevich, editor of the "Kanadski Glasnik," and Spiro Hutularevich. He explained why the S. N. O. should be organized and the need for the Red Cross chapters to be incorporated in it.

At a later meeting, officers were elected and the new, greater organization came into being.

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Pupin to the Rescue

AT the beginning of the war, all immigrants in Canada had to register to the authorities and prove that they were from an allied country. All of them who were not from an allied country had to renew their registrations every 40 days.

In May 1918 a new order came out that everyone had to register within 14 days or be subject to a \$50 fine and or a jail sentence.

One day 50 Serbs who had not registered were arrested.

The S.N.O. branch sent a telegram to Prof. Michael Pupin, who was our honorary consul in New York at that time, and explained the situation.

Next day the Mayor of Toronto received an order from the Canadian government in Ottawa to release all the men who were members of the S. N. O.

This example illustrates how much prestige the S.N.O. had among the Canadians and how it aided its members during the first World War.

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Recruiting for Army

IN the beginning of 1917, Milan Pribicevich, head of the Serbian Army mission in America, arrived in Toronto, accompanied by Gajo Vasiljevich of Welland and Michun Pavichevich.

The Srpska Narodna Odbrana ranch in Toronto called a special meeting of our men in the "Beograd" restaurant.

Mr. Pribicevich cited that the

purpose of his visit to the United States and Canada was to recruit volunteers for the Serbian Army.

After his speech a number of the men signed up, among which, the first volunteer, 17-year-old Stevan Trumich, was killed in action in Serbia.

B. M. Markovich, present SNF Trustee Board secretary, was made a member of the Serbian Army mission. His duty was to meet the volunteers from the United States coming to Toronto and to send them on to the army camp at Levis, Quebec.

In August of 1918 this duty was turned over to Lazar Dzelatovich who handled it till the end of the war.

Our Friend—Mrs. Hamilton

Mrs. Hamilton, with her work for the Serbian cause, greatly helped the Serbian people in Canada and elsewhere. During the first World War she led an active propaganda campaign for the Serbs among the Canadian people. She organized in Toronto the "Serbian Relief Fund" to which the Canadians donated money which was then relayed abroad to the Serbian Red Cross and the cause of the Serbian war orphans.

Being well known in Toronto social circles at the time, Mrs. Hamilton's efforts met with great success.

As a token of its appreciation and indebtedness, the SNO in Canada gave Mrs. Hamilton a gold fountain pen gift.

And, after the war, the Serbian Government conferred upon her the Order of St. Sava decoration of the first rank for her great work.

The medal was ceremoniously presented to her in the Toronto city hall by A. V. Seferovich, the Yugoslav consul to Canada at that time. The Mayor of Toronto and other civic officials witnessed the ceremony.

Other officials of the "Serbian Relief Fund" were similarly honored.

Mrs. Hamilton often thought of the Serbs and their gifts to her. Here is a letter written by her in 1938 to illustrate the fact:

"Dear Mr. Markovich,

I have your kind letter of the 9th and am glad to send, under separate cover, a photograph of myself taken during the war period.

I think often of my association with you and your people in Toronto and I prize the decoration conferred upon me by the Serbian Government and I daily use the lovely fountain pen which you so kindly gave me. It is a pleasure to be once more in touch with you.

Believe me,
Yours very sincerely,
Constance I. Hamilton."

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Post-War Arrivals

DURING 1919 and 1920 most of the Serbs who had arrived in Toronto before the war returned home, between 1920 to 1924 the Serbian population in Toronto was at a standstill.

However, after 1924 new immigrants started to arrive. These Serbs hailed from the provinces of Dalmatia, Hercegovina, Slavonija, Lika, Kordum, Banat and Backa. Some also came from the Bitolj and Ohrid vicinity.

As a result, between the years of 1926 and 1928 there were around 500 Serbs in Toronto. The pre-war arrivals aided the new arrivals to find jobs.

With the end of the war all the Serbian patriotic organizations functioning at that time ended their work and generally disbanded.

However, the cultural need was felt for some time. In fact, the people were so eager for our songs and dances that they often gathered and held their parties in private homes.

With this need in mind and with the organization of the Savez "Srbobran"; Srpski Savez "Sloboda" and Srpski Savez Svesna "Srbadija" in the United States, the Toronto Serbs decided to sign up in a fraternal organization.

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SNF Lodge Organized

ON April 10, 1927 a meeting was held in the home of Jovo Vrljenich at 216 Sackville St. and the "Plavi Jadran" Lodge No. 152 was organized. The parent organization was the Srpski Savez Svesna "Srbadija" which was later incorporated into the Srpski Narodni Savez (SNF).

At that time 15 members were signed up among whom were Milutin Chuk, B. M. Markovich, Nikola Mikalacki, Milan Petrovich, Mihailo Savkovich, Vladimir Bastich, Matija Lalich, Dr. Dimitrije Malin, Pero Sparavalo, Milan Zvecevac and Milica Miloskovich.

The first president of the lodge was Milan Zvecevac. Milan Trivich was the first secretary and Mihailo Savkovich the first treasurer.

The "Plavi Jadran" did much for the cultural life of the Serbs in Toronto with its promotion of concerts and dances. In the 1930's it was the most active of the organizations in this city and sponsored all the affairs held in the city.

The lodge is now headed by Boza Milanovich. It has over 90 members while its Junior Order auxiliary has an additional 37 members.

(To be continued)