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DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN CANADA AND SERBIA

The first Consular relations between Canada (then part of the British Dominions) and the Kingdom of Serbia date back to the Treaty between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Serbia of 1903.¹ The first Consul of Serbia to arrive in Canada under the Treaty was Captain Antun Seferovitch, a Montenegrin officer who had settled in the USA before the First World War. He came to Montreal in August 1918 and after the 1st December, 1918 the Consulate changed its name to that of the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

By the Treaty of St. Germain of the 10th September 1919² which was signed by the Allied and associated powers, America, England, France and Italy and Japan and the new Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, all the old Treaties, Conventions and Agreements of the Kingdom of Serbia were assumed by the new Kingdom. As the latter was a constitutional parliamentary monarchy it was natural that it undertook to assure the full protection of life and liberty of its citizens without distinction of nationality, language, race and religion by the terms of the Treaty. This was important because the Serbs of the old Kingdom had joined on the first of December 1918 for the first time in their history the new peoples of Croatia and Slovenia. These were both Roman Catholic and had formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which was destroyed at the end of the war. Austrians, Hungarians and also Bulgarians had all been enemy aliens in Canada during the war and had been treated as such. Those now living in the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were given one year to decide to remain as citizens of the new country or leave with their personal possessions, while their real property had to remain behind, for which, however, they were given compensation.

There were very few Treaties of the old Kingdom of Serbia that remained applicable to Canada. Besides the Consular Treaty, there was the old Treaty between Serbia and the United Kingdom for the Extradition of Fugitive Criminals of 1901 which remained in force not only after the First World War, but even up to the present time with the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, despite all the changes of political conditions that have happened.

The first Serbian Consul in Canada was born in Podgorica in 1887. He settled in the US before the war and joined the Montenegrin

Government, military and diplomatic mission when the Kingdom of Montenegro was overrun by the Central Powers. He was very active in the recruitment of Serbian and Montenegrin volunteers who were fighting not only for the liberation of their countries but also in their majority, for the union of all Serbs after the war. The first volunteers began to join the war in August 1914 when America was still a neutral power. Professor Michael Pupin of Columbia University, who was an internationally known scientist and inventor, as Honorary Consul of Serbia in New York approached the British and Italian Consuls to help in transporting the volunteers to Naples in Italy and Patras in Greece at a nominal cost of \$20.00 each which was financed by the Serbian Government.³ The first batch of 4000 American Serbs and Montenegrins (with a small Croatian contingent) left, with the last group of 254 departing from New York in the fall of 1915. By that time, however, it had become too late to help the Serbian Army in its heroic battle against Austrians.

Lazar Mijusković, the Montenegrin Minister in New York in 1915 asked Pupin to negotiate with the English consul for permission to assemble in Canada the volunteers from both the USA and Canada so that they could be transported from Halifax to England for the Balkan front. The Montenegrin delegation recommended Antun Seferovich as a leading American settler to organize this work, hence his later appointment as Serbian consul in this country. Seferovich, in fact, remained in Canada all his life, married a Canadian and after his retirement in March 1931 he continued to receive his Serbian pension. In 1931 Pero Zaneta became the acting consul until May 1939 when he was replaced by V.M. Vukmirović who in 1942 left for Chicago and Petar Čabrić was appointed, having himself been in Chicago.⁴

Prof. Michael Pupin, as Chairman of the Serbian National Shield Society, which was formed in New York in 1914, used his very important connections in American society to further the cause of the Serbian Government. An offshoot of this society was formed also in Canada in 1916 and both have been very active ever since. During the Second World War, when the civil war between the resistance movements in Yugoslavia spilled over to North America and every other Yugoslav settlement abroad, both societies supported the national resistance forces of General Draža Mihailovich and have remained opposed to the Communist takeover after the war by the

partisans of Marshal Tito.

Although declaring its neutrality, America looked with sympathy upon the efforts of the various Slav peoples amongst its settlers to help the Allied cause. Later on, when it joined the War, President Wilson was one of the main propounders of the principle of self-determination for the nations forming the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially the Czechs, Slovaks and South Slavs. The Serbs, around the *Srbobran* paper and its editor, Peter Luburić and the organization Serbian Sloga were giving their full support to Michael Pupin's work. The Montenegrans with Capt. Seferovitch were also in the forefront of the struggle. Although warned not to embarrass neutral America, the Montenegrans in national uniforms with music and flags, 170 volunteers in number, paraded in downtown Chicago and, according to tradition, fired their arms into the air. The police had to intervene and arrest the heads of mission, but all were released very soon, thanks to the intervention of Michael Pupin.

During 1915, 1900 volunteers left for Serbia and Montenegro through Canada.⁵ In June 1916 the Canadian Government provided \$50,000.00 to be placed at the disposal of the acting High Commissioner in London for the relief of Poles, Serbs and Montenegrans.⁶ At that time the Polish nation did not have even their own state after long years of partition, while the future of Serbia and Montenegro in the middle of a life and death struggle with the enemy, was anyone's guess. Yet the spirit of these volunteers was boundless in the face of the acts of heroism of the small Serbian and Montenegrin people who, without any support from the Allies, fought a desperate battle and then retreated in the winter of 1916 through the terrible Albanian snow bound mountains to reach the small Island of Corfou where thousands died and were buried in the blue Ionian sea.

In 1917 a new movement to recruit volunteers began in North America to reinforce the Serbian army of the Salonica front. The Privy Council issued orders for fixed rates to apply for the transport by rail of Serbian reservists and recruits for the allies of Great Britain.⁷ The Department of National Defense in Ottawa provided for the recruiting of Serbs for overseas services.⁸ Even the Mounted Police files contain applications for exemption by Serbs who were interned in Canada as "enemy aliens" because of their Austro-Hungarian origin.⁹ Miss Olga Markovich, the daughter of one of the founders of the Serbian National Shield Society of Canada, Boza

Markovich (1890–1970), mentioned in her study on the history of Serbs in Canada¹⁰ how the Society helped many of those arrested and fined. In May 1918 the Canadian authorities began a belated enforcement of \$50.00 fines against persons who were not able to produce documentary evidence that they did not come within the enemy aliens legislation. It was Prof. Pupin again who intervened from the US in favor of members of the Canadian Serbian Shield Society to guarantee their allegiance to the Allied cause. America by then was at war with the Central powers.

In 1918 a Charter was issued in Canada to the Serbian Relief Committee organized to assist the aid to war victims and especially the sick and young children who had suffered terribly during the Albanian retreat.¹¹ Some estimate that 40,000 children perished in addition to the tens of thousands of adults.

Captain Antun Seferovich, who personally gave his salary to help the refugees, spoke movingly to the Empire Club of Canada in Toronto on the 27th January 1916.¹² Dressed in the national costume of his country he told his audience about the plight of Serbia and Montenegro, those “two countries that in older times used to be one, but which were separated by the Turkish invasion. Since the invasion of Serbian soil over 500 years ago, Montenegrans have been fighting the Islam Turks side by side with Serbs.”

After reviewing our history Seferovich explained that there was an urgent need for medical aid and doctors although in time of peace, Montenegro had only one hospital with 40 beds and only 4 doctors in its capital, Cetinje. This, said the speaker with pride, was because “the population was so healthy that doctors were then rather only for show.” The war had changed all that. Dr. Gutcha, an American doctor who volunteered had to use even heated rocks to relieve the rheumatic pain of many soldiers. Seferovich then described the terrible tragedy which happened to the 500 Serbian reservists who had gathered in Canada and left Halifax in December 1915. Their ship was sunk by enemy boats off the port of St. John of Medua in the Adriatic and all the men were drowned, including an American nurse attached to the Red Cross in Serbia since 1912. 600 tons of supplies raised by relief funds were also lost. The speaker was clearly moved when he described the fate of children and the civilian population and showed photographs of some of the atrocities committed by the Austrian, German and Bulgarian occupying forces. Many chil-

dren had been shot as hostages, women were killed and bodies mutilated.

At the end of his speech he asked for aid, relief and also arms. Montenegrans numbering 25,000 were fighting many times their numbers using old Russian guns of 1898, two batteries of cannon from the old fort of Leghorn in Italy of 1896 and three French batteries. Before 1912 Montenegro had 8000 square miles of territory with a population of 300,000. After the Balkan war and before 1914, their number had increased to 500,000. The speaker then said: "Our people owe to Gladstone and the English nation a great deal. Let us owe you more; Gladstone is marked in our hearts when in a speech in 1895 he said: in my considered opinion the traditions of Montenegro exceed in glory those of Marathon and Thermopylae and are the real traditions of the world. ." The speaker then concluded: "The eagles of Lovtchen have left the rocks; they fly from place to place in search of shelter, but they will return one day again because the Barbarians cannot destroy what God has created, nor can they be masters of the world. Throughout Serbia and Montenegro there are no more smiles and songs of long past wars — so characteristic of our people, but now there is mourning and tears. I have spoken."

Another testimony of the humanitarian missionary work for the relief of Serbia can be found in the private letters of Mrs. Yelena Lozanich-Frothingham who visited Canada several times in the First World War. These letters to her sister have now been published by the Association of Veterans' Recipients of the Albanian Memorial Medal in Belgrade in 1970.¹³ The late Serbian academician, Professor Kosta Todorović, who wrote the introduction to this book, explained how the struggle of Serbia for its freedom at that time followed the old Serbian legend of the predecessors of the battle of Kosovo which stated: "God did not create us without ourselves; God will not free us from slavery without ourselves." Sacrifice by the people was essential to attain one's freedom, but the spirit of Christian humanism and patriotism was clearly the guiding force of that generation of Serbs as the historic records indicate to us today.

Miss Lozanich was at that time in her early twenties and she joined her father, the well known Serbian academician, diplomat and chemist, Dr. Sima Lozanich, as a member of the Serbian military mission sent to America in 1917. Michael Pupin introduced her as a guest speaker to famous American industrialists, governors, poli-

ticians and philanthropists. Wherever she went, Miss Lozanich left a deep impression because of her excellent English, her warmhearted, honest and direct approach to Serbia's tragedy and needs. "This small and heroic country that went through untold suffering and sacrifices for its freedom" greatly moved public opinion as can be seen from the amount of the funds she raised during her voyage. It was during these years that she met John Frothingham who belonged to an old New England family and was also engaged on war relief. He became a firm supporter of Serbia and when the war broke out he sent from his personal funds a complete hospital with 200 beds, doctors, nurses and supplies to the value of \$200,000.00 to Skoplje for the Serbian army. He later financed several homes for orphaned children in Macedonia, then in the South of France during Serbia's retreat and after the war at Sremska Kamenica near Belgrade and in Vranje. He married Miss Lozanich in 1920 and died in 1935.

Writing in her diarized letter in October 1917 while visiting the small community of Oak Lake in Manitoba, Miss Lozaich noted: "It is unbelievable, but true, that in this small farfetched place from the start of the war clothes and sheets were being sewn for Serbia, including hospital supplies. This was quite unexpected. The same day after lunch the ladies took me to the school to see and meet the girls who were sewing for us Serbs." She collected \$200.00 that evening after speaking to a church gathering. "One Methodist clergyman spoke with great admiration of the heroic past and struggle of the Serbs and asked for a lot of books on our country in English."

Again in Kingston, Ontario in November 1917 she met the Governor of the Province of 6 million who had proclaimed a day for Serbian aid in all schools of the Province. In this relatively small town since the start of the war, the Committee to aid Serbia collected already \$25,000.00.

The full story of Canada's role in helping Serbia and Montenegro in the First World War has still to be researched, as the papers of the Canadian medical doctor, Dr. Cockburn clearly indicate. The Mission of the British hospital group has been described by Dr. Stobart in her autobiography¹³ but nothing has been written about the many Canadians who had also joined as doctors and nurses to help the Serbian people in their tragic struggle.

The same lack of research can be found also in trying to trace the early history of Serbian settlers in Canada before the First World

War. Even Captain Seferovich when he became consul had difficulty in finding about the numbers of Serbs, Montenegrans and other immigrants who settled in this country.¹⁵ The Department of Citizenship and Immigration after the war prepared from a detailed study of the handwritten shipping logs from arrivals to Canada a table of immigrants admitted here by ethnic origin. Under the name "Yugoslavian" which was only in force after 1929 replacing the previous name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, those immigrants born in the regions territorially included in Yugoslavia were grouped under this name. The same procedure of reconstruction was also made by the Canadian official population census which dates back to 1871. In the case of "Yugoslav" the population by origin (based on the ethnic or cultural group of the ancestor of the immigrant on the male side) had to be recalculated also for the pre war period according to the territorial re-arrangements consequent from the World War 1914-1918. The same was done for foreign born population by birthplace. Yugoslavia (or "Jugo-Slavia" as stated in the census) consisted of "Servia and Montenegro and territory formerly included in Austria-Hungary (Carniola, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, part of Banat, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Bulgaria (ceded territory including the town of Strumitsa and Tsaribrod)."

While the Table of immigrants of the statistics section of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration¹⁶ shows an increasing number of "Yugoslav" arrivals since 1900 (a total of 5876 up to 1906 and another 6057 up to 1915) with a drastic drop during the end of the war (5 arrivals in 1916, nil in 1917 and only 1 in 1918), the Population census by origin does not give any figure prior to 1921¹⁷ in which year the first total of Yugoslavs is 3906, while the Population by birthplace¹⁸ also for the year 1921 is given for Yugoslavia as 1946.

In one of the earliest post First World War studies on Canadian immigration¹⁹ Professor W.G. Smith gives in a table²⁰ "Immigration from Eastern Europe since 1900 (fiscal years)" under the heading "Serbian" a much smaller total for the years up to 1918 than the Department of Citizenship and Immigration total for "Yugoslavs" (Serbs total 1265 and Yugoslavs 17,815). This is natural in view of the large arrivals from Austro-Hungarian lands. Prof. Smith's figures on Serbs appear to have come (like his other figures) from a US Government immigration study of 1910.²¹ Prof. Smith points out that

the majority of immigrants from Eastern Europe are Slavs and that such is the case for those designated as Austro-Hungarian of whom 200,016 arrived in Canada between 1900 and 1918.

Professor Tomović of Brock University in a paper presented to a symposium on immigration in Zagreb²² has tried to work out demographically the increase of Yugoslav population in Canada since 1900 allowing for a natural net increase and a 5% outflow (returned or emigration to the US). Using the Department of Immigration figures, by 1918 the total number of Yugoslavs would be 21,039. It is little wonder, therefore, that our first Consul captain Seferovich had such difficulty in finding out the number of immigrants from the old country. In the US the situation regarding statistics of "Yugoslavs" was equally confusing.²³

The ethnic distribution of our settlers was of political importance also prior to the war because of the propaganda campaign that Austro-Hungary, with the support of the Catholic Church, waged against Serbia's foreign policy and its role as a Piedmont for the liberation of the South Slavs. A study of the local press and the volunteer work to recruit supporters in the war has been made by Ivan Ćizmić for the USA, but no such research exists for Canada.

The Serbian Government by its Declaration in December 1914 and its announced war aims in July 1917 at Corfou had clearly indicated its intention of liberating all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in their ethnic territories in one new national state based on the principle of self-determination. As early as the 4th September 1914 the Premier of Serbia, Nikola Pašić, sent a message through diplomatic channels giving the war aims of his foreign policy as: "a strong southeastern Slav state which would include all Serbs, all Croats and all Slovenes. Such a state of 15 million inhabitants would be a stabilising influence in the area."²⁴ Pašić's figure would apparently include the Bulgarians if one accepts the demographic totals given by R.W. Seton Watson in his well known study on the South Slav Question in 1911.²⁵

The difficulties of promoting this policy in very strong opposition to the Central Powers can be seen from the history of the Volunteer movement in North America during the war. Colonel Milan Pribichevich, who was sent by the Serbian Government to head the mission to recruit these volunteers, was successful only in getting the support of the Serbs and Montenegrans, while the Catholic Slovenes

and Croatians, especially amongst the working population, in their majority failed to respond. Having arrived in the US in the fall of 1916 after 10 months of work he was able to send to Salonika 800 volunteers (750 from the US and 50 from Canada) of whom only 30 were Croatian and 10 Slovenes.²⁶ In a separate campaign by Srbobran 600 volunteers responded of whom 30 were Croatian. For Vidovdan 1917, which is a Serbian national commemoration, he expected to recruit 2000 men but of these only 50 were Croatian. The counterpropaganda by Austro-Hungary was strong amongst both Catholics and socialists who claimed that the Yugoslav programme meant a loss of national identity to the Croats and Slovenes. The Serb idea of union of South Slavs did not have a strong appeal except with intellectuals who supported the Yugoslav Committee in London, Paris and Corfou. The Serbian diplomat, Ljuba Mihailovich, in Washington, even offered to all volunteers priority for future employment in the new State after liberation and 5 hectares of land. Pribichevich complained that from a total of 3000 recruits hardly 300 were Croats and Slovenes: "The reasons for this," he said, "are solely in our insufficient support for their feelings and aims with regards to their unity with the Serbs."²⁷ There were also complaints of "Big Serb" propaganda attributed to Michael Pupin and the *Srpski Dnevnik*. Yet, *Hrvatski Svijet* wrote in support of Serbia's war aims: "At the very moment when the Allies are discussing the future of the Balkan states, the first *Vidovdan* detachment passed through Paris showing their resistance to national subjugation. At the same time the "Zrinski" detachment was going through London where the Allies were discussing the Adriatic question with the Italian Minister Sonino and our Pašić. . ."²⁸ The latter greeted the volunteers as follows: "In my capacity of an old soldier, I see in you the heirs of our heroic Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. I see in you Marko and Miloš, Zrinski and Frankopan, our great heroes for which the world admires us." In the name of the Yugoslav Committee Hinko Hinkovich said to the volunteers: "You have hurried over the ocean to achieve your aim with rifle in hand, in the name our of triune, but united, nation of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes still prisoners in the Austro-Hungarian jail." It was no small achievement therefore for the Serbian Government to surmount the Italian policy of annexing the Dalmatian coast which they were promised under the secret Treaty of London, to retain South Serbia and Macedonia which had

been offered in great parts by Great Britain to Bulgaria and to join with the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes of Austro-Hungary for the first time in their history.

An example of how history tends to repeat itself can be found in the attitude of the American military command who were against involvements in the Balkans when Premier Pašić tried to form a Slavic League in the US of Yugoslav volunteers to fight on the Salonica Front. General Pershing, commander of the American troupes in Europe, wrote in his memoirs: "I cite this to show how we could disperse our American troupes if we had not taken a firm stand that the Western front is the place where all efforts have to be made."²⁹

Serbia had mobilized 706,343 soldiers or 27% of its population of 2,600,000. To these should be added 40,000 Serb volunteers from the former Austro-Hungary, 10,000 from North America, 50,000 from Montenegro. Nearly 50% of the mobilized (369,818) were killed or died from sickness. The Austrians admitted that by 1917 alone 630,000 had been lost in camps.

Without knowing it, fate was preparing another Golgotha for the Serbs hardly 20 years later. However, that is another page from our Serbian heritage.

Toronto, Canada

²⁹P.A.C. (Public Archives of Canada: Consul general of Yugoslavia, Montreal, 1919, 1921-32 -RG 76 vol. 631, File 963866, Micr. reel C-10, 446.

³⁰Repertoire des Relations des Pays Yugoslaves concernant le droit International, depuis 1800 jusqu'a nos jours, Belgrade, 1953.

³¹Ivan Ćizmić: Dobrovoljački pokret Jugoslovenskih iseljenika u SAD u Prvom svjetskom ratu: Historijski Zbornik, G., 23-24, 1970-71.

³²P.A.C. Consul General of Yugoslavia, op. cit.

³³I. Ćizmić, op. cit., 24

³⁴P.A.C. Privy Council Office Orders in Council (R.G. 2), 1916 June 4, R.G. 1517, also R.G. 19, Dep. of Finance, 1916, vol. 2588, p. 354.

³⁵P.A.C. R. 24, Dep. National Defense Mil. District record 1917, file 35 A, 1-9, vol. 4581.

³⁶P.A.C. R.G. 18B, R.C.P. Commissioners office, Vol. 1789, file 170, pt. 811, also vol. 1768-1793.

³⁷Olga B. Marković: Doseljavanje Srba u Kanadu i njihova aktivnost, Windsor, 1965.

¹¹P.A.C. R.G. 68 Registrar General 1908–1918 Gen. Index, p. 496 and also 1919–29 Index, p. 118.

¹²Empire Club of Canada. Addresses delivered to members during the sessions 1915–1916, 1916–1917, ed. Dr. Alfred Hall. Toronto: Bryant Press.

¹³Jelena Lozanić-Frothingham: Dobrotvorna Misija za Srbiju u I. Svetskom ratu, pisma iz Amerike i Kanade, 1915–1920, godine. Beograd, 1970. Udruž. nosilaca Albanske spomenice.

¹⁴M.A. St. Clair Stobart: Miracles and adventures, Autobiography, London, 1936.

¹⁵P.A.C. Consul general of Yugoslavia, *op. cit.*

¹⁶Immigrants admitted to Canada by ethnic origin, Dep. of Citizenship and Immigration.

¹⁷Table 34, Population by ethnic groups for Canada 1901–1961, Official census.

¹⁸Table 48, Population by birthplace, Canada 1901–1961, Official census.

¹⁹W.G. Smith: A study in Canadian immigration, Ryerson Gen. Citizenship Series, Sandford, 1920.

²⁰Table 35, Immigration from Eastern Europe since 1900.

²¹Immigration Situation in Canada, Report of the Immigration Commission of the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1911.

²²Dr. V. Tomović, Broj i društveni položaj naših iseljenika u Kanadi, Referat jugoslovenskom simposijumu, Zagreb, 1976. "Iseljništvo naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije i uzajamne veze snjim."

²³I. Ćizmić, *op. cit.*, p. 32, states that before the First World War there were about 700,000 "Yugoslav" immigrants and settlers in the U.S.A. of whom less than 100,000 were Serbs or Montenegrans.

²⁴M. Ekmečić: Ratni ciljevi Srbije, 1914, Beograd, 1973 (p. 511, note 20 states "17 million, according to the circular note of the 4th September and 12 million, according to most other calculations.")

²⁵R.W. Seton Watson: The South Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy, Reprint 1911 (Howard Fertig, New York, 1969, p. 1).

²⁶I. Ćizmić, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁷I. Ćizmić, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²⁸I. Ćizmić, *op. cit.*, p. 34 and Jugoslovenska Džava, 6.9, 1917, no. 95.

²⁹John Pershing: My experience in the World War, New York, 1931, p. 141.