

By Stane Kranjc, Bolton Ontario, Canada. June, 2021

INDEPENDENT SLOVENIA, 30th ANNIVERSARY

The following is a short history of over 1000 years old, long, bumpy road to Independent Democratic Republic Slovenia and work of Slovenians in Canada for Democratic Independent RS.

The Territory of Slovenia has been originally inhabited since prehistoric times by Illyrian and Celtic people. One of its oldest findings, dating back to the 43,000 BC, what is probably the oldest musical instrument in the world, whistle made of bear bone, found in Divje Babe site in the valley of Idria river in Slovenia. There were also many other discoveries of bone weapons and tools.

In the 6th century AD , several tribes of Slavic people united into a state formation Karantania, headed by democratically elected dukes of the duchy Karantania - Carinthia- present Slovenia. Thomas Jefferson studied this early and unique system of democratic government and used it as one of the inspirations, when he took pen in hand to write the declaration of independents (the genesis of contractual Theory and the installation of the Dukes of Carinthia) – (Prof. Joseph Felican, Druzba sv. Mohorja Klagenfurt.

In 8th century AD conversion to Christianity started

In 9th century was Frankish feudal system.

In 10th century Slovenian land was ruled by Roman empire

In 11 century was the beginning of intensive German colonialization

In the 14 century most of Slovenian territory was taken over by Austrian Habsburgs empire

In 15 to 17th century was peasant revolts and Turkish invasions.

In 1550 – protestantism and first book was written in Slovenian. In 1848 first Slovenian political program “Zedinjena Slovenija” “United Slovenia” was formed. Slovenian intellectuals demanded unification of Slovenian lands, Slovenian schools and public offices.

Since 14 century, to the end of first World War 1918, Slovenia was ruled by Austrian Habsburg - Bavarian empire. During this war as many as one million people were lost along Italian front, around the Soca river on Primorska, including many Slovenians as Austrian soldiers.

After the WW1, 1918 “Serbian Kingdom” was formed, including Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro. Later in 1929 name was changed to “Yugoslavia” With western alliance approval, Italian army occupied western part of Slovenia - Primorska, including Trieste and Gorizia. People on Primorska land were never given opportunity to vote under what regime they wanted to live. Even in democracy dictatorial decisions are made.

Slovenians living in Carinthia -Koroska in Austria were given a right to hold Plebiscite - Referendum, majority elected to stay in Austria, as they did not want to live in Serbian-Yugoslavia. Part of Prekmurje region was given to Hungary.

First Yugoslavia with its capital in Belgrade Serbia, lasted from 1929 to the end of WW2, May, 1945.

During the WW2, Slovenia was occupied by Italy and Germany.

Over a long history, Slovenia lost two thirds of its land to our neighbours, Italy, Austria, Hungary and some to Croatia. Today Slovenia land is only one third of what it used to be.

After the WW2, 1945, newly established Communist “Yugoslavia including Slovenia was formed. Primorska (minus Trieste and Gorica) was rejoined with Slovenia in Communist Yugoslavia. Koroska stayed under Austria and part of Prekmurje was kept by Hungary.

From the beginning of both Yugoslavia's, it was clear that there was no future for Slovenia in Yugoslavian Federation. Serbian plan was to form “Velika Serbia”- “Big Serbia” and push Slovenia and its people in to a Balkan melting pot.

In 1973 constitution of former Yugoslavia was approved by federal Parliament, all republics and territories, with the following clause: “derived from the rights and justice of every nationality to self determination including the right of secession”. It was obvious that Territories of Yugoslavia, including Slovenia were not going to reach an understanding with the federal government, to enact changes they wanted. When Yugoslavia started to fall apart, Slovenia decided to hold a referendum on December 23, 1989, with the following results; 88.5 voted in favour of independence. In 2003, 67% voted to join UN.

With my wife Elsie, we arrived to Slovenia about a week prior to declaration of independence and forming of World Slovenian Congress - WSC. Secretary of the USA James Baker was speaking on television in Belgrade, among other things in support of Yugoslavia he said: USA IS SUPPORTING UNITED YUGOSLOVIA” This was hard to believe, especially for my wife, American Slovenian, born in Ohio, like it probably was for tens of thousand American Slovenians who worked hard for Independent, Democratic Slovenia. We could not and still don't understand, why would one of the

largest democracy in the world support corrupt, communist dictatorship? I said to Elsie; Milosevic and Yugoslavian army just got a green light to attack Slovenia, there will be a war.

Thanks to Slovenian people that did not listen to Baker and Bush and declared independence on June 25, 1991.

The following day, Serbian - Yugoslavian army aggression on Slovenia started and lasted 10 days. Slovenian Territorial army, police and Slovenian people defended our land and were victorious. Yugoslavia's army had to leave, confirming Slovenian independence.

CANADIAN SLOVENIAS WORK FOR INDEPENDENTS AND RECOGNITION OF DEMOCRATIC NATION SLOVENIA.

Large majority of Slovenians in Canada supported Sovereign Democratic Slovenia. From late 1940 to 1991, news paper "SLOVENSKA DRZAVA" - SLOVENIAN NATION was published in Toronto. Much was written about Communist dictatorship in Yugoslavia and Slovenia and hope to some day replace it with independent democracy.

In 1989 Slovenians in Canada formed organization named by Slovenia " "Konferenca Zdomskih Slovencev" meaning "Conference of Homeless Slovenians".

At a first membership meeting held on 25 July, 1990, I objected to this name and made a proposal that this name should be changed to "Canadian Slovenian Congress- CSC. My comment was " we are not homeless, we have homes and families. All members at the meeting agreed with the proposal and Canadian Slovenian Congress was born. Name was also later changed to Congress in other countries.

Objectives of the CSC were to; To have Slovenians in Canada nationally recognized, to get CSC national Charter, to unite Slovenians, to help form World Slovenian Congress -WSC, and to work for independent, democratic country Slovenia.

First committee was elected on 25th of may, 1990 : Dr France Habjan President, Dr. Srečko Pregelj vice president, Stane Kranjc Vice President and Program coordinator, Leander Skof Secretary, Jozica Vegelj Treasurer, Committee members, Peter Cekuta, Lojze Kocjancic, Tone Komljanec and Dr. Zlatko Verbic Karl Vipavec was named Legal Adviser. CSC work program was outlined and approved.

In 1991, ten CSC delegates and two delegates representing Canadian Slovenian Council were elected and invited to participate at a WSC founding meeting in Cankarjev Dom, Ljubljana, on June 27,1991 and to attend declaration of independence on June 25,1991 in Ljubljana, all 12 of us attended.

First World Slovenian Congress -WSC office was in Austria at Mohorjeva Druzba - Mohor's Society. Substantial amount of money was sent by CSC to Austria to help organize and equip the first WSC office.

VSE-SLOVENSKI ODBOR – VSO – ALL-SLOVENIA COMMITTEE

On December 10,1990 “All Slovenian Committee - VSO” was formed in Toronto, uniting 24 Slovenian organizations in Ontario.

Managing committee was elected:

Stane Kranjc President, Dr. France Habjan communications coordinator, Jozica Vegelj Treasurer, Elizabeth Polinar Secretary, Rev. Valentin Batic and Peter Cekuta committee members.

Lawyer Carl Vipavec Legal adviser.

First objective of VSO was to help flood victims in Slovenia. Financial campaign was started and lasted to spring, 1991. All the funds raised, 134,000 dollars were sent to charitable organization Caritas in Slovenia.

After financial campaign for flood victims was completed, much larger financial, cultural and political campaign for Independent Democratic Republic of Slovenia was started. In the framework of VSO we formed financial fund, led by Victor Zenkovic, Information Center, led by Leander Skof and Radio program "Voice of Canadian Slovenians, led by Maria Ahacic Pollak

We raised 550,000 dollars, 500,000 donated to new Slovenian Government and \$50,000 to Slovenian charity organization Caritas. There were also campaigns in other provinces in Canada, Manitoba Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec. Funds raised were sent directly to Slovenia.

Besides financial activities, we were talking and writing to Canadian Government leaders, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougal, asking them to help to stop the war in Slovenia and Yugoslavia and to recognize Independent Democratic Republic Slovenia.

In most larger cities in Canada, demonstrations were organized with large attendance, with Slovenian flags, many signs like "Freedom for Slovenia", "Recognize Slovenia: and so on, playing and singing Slovenian songs, speeches demanding and supporting Freedom, peace and Slovenian independence.

Mass was celebrated for peace and independent Slovenia in all 5 Slovenian churches in Canada.

During the aggression on Slovenia, manifestation was also held on Slovenian Summer camp grounds, near Bolton, Ontario, around 2000 people attended and demanded to stop the aggression and to recognize independent Slovenia. This event and others were broadcasted by Canadian TV and reported on radios and news papers.

One month prior to the recognition we started to plan a big celebration for Jan 15, 1992, when we expected Canada to recognize Slovenia, We invited representatives from embassy of several countries in Canada, Canadian Government representatives, representatives from new Slovenian government, representatives of Canadian Slovenian community and Arch bishop of Toronto Alojzij Ambrozic. With this invitation we did let Canadian government know that we expect Canada to recognize Slovenia on that day. I am happy to say that our plan and hard work paid off. Canada was among the first countries in the world to recognize Independent Slovenia on January 15, 1992. This was one of the largest Slovenian celebration in Canada, held in Slovenian centre on Browns Line in Toronto. Hall was packed and some people were standing outside in the cold, listening to the program.

During 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 Communications were established with Slovenian organizations around the world and leaders in Slovenia.

We were united, talk the same language, were on the same page, proposing same justifications for peace, freedom and Independent democratic Slovenia. Like to mention a few people. In Slovenia, Arch Bishop of Ljubljana dr. Alojzij Sustar, Dr. Dimitry Rupelj, Profesor Lojze Peterle, Dr. Pucnik, Dr. Janez Dular, Mrs Spomenka Hribar and Dr. Franc Bucar.

In USA we communicated with Professor Karl Bonuti, Dr. Rudolf Susel, Dr. Joze Bernik, and American Home - AMERISKA

DOMOVINA news paper.

There were also communications with Slovenians in Argentina, Australia and European countries.

To keep communications open and to minimize travel expenses, several telephone conference meetings were held with Slovenian representatives in Canada, in Slovenia and around the world.

In Canada we communicated with leaders of Slovenian organizations, Arch Bishop of Toronto (later Cardinal) Dr. Alojz Ambrozic, Slovenian priests, Canadian government leaders, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and External Affairs minister Barbara MacDougal, some members of Parliament MP, Provincial MPP, and Toronto municipal Councilman Joe Mihevc

At that time, we were also in contact with Alenka, Jerak at still existing Yugoslavian Embassy in Ottawa. Alenka was a big help with her valuable information.

In 1992, American Home newspaper asked me to write 100 words about Slovenia, published in American Home news paper.

“ A land Called Slovenia “

Once upon a time in land called Slovenia there was only a hope of what today is a reality. From Prekmurje to Adriatic sea, Slovenia is independent, democratic and free.

Slovenians suffered under the worst political regimes. As a result of the love of their land , believe in justice, God and themselves they survived. We should learn from Slovenian achievements “ When you do not succeed at first, never give up. Try again and again! Finally long, deserved and earned reward was granted.

These gifts of freedom and independence must never be taken for-granted. They must always be cherished and protected.

Stane Kranjc, Bolton, Ontario, Canada

To celebrate 30th anniversary of Independent Republic of Slovenia, All-Slovenian Cultural Committee -VSKO, prepared a program “ To smo mi, kanadski Slovenci”. videos of Slovenian organizations in Canada, was presented on You Tube and Face Book. Thanks to VSKO President Veronica Margutch, her daughter Emma, Millie Muhic and all the organization that cooperated.

Also in honour of 30th anniversary of Slovenian independence, at 9 pm on June 25, 2021, CN tower in Toronto, was illuminated with colours of Slovenian flag, flashing white, blue and red colours up and down 553 meters high Tower. This was a sight I will remember forever. Thanks to Representative of Slovenians in Canada Mario Kolaric and First Councillor/Deputy Blaz Slanic from Slovenian Embassy in Ottawa for organizing this great historical event.

On behalf of over 40,000 Slovenia's in Canada, I wish all Slovenians, continued Peace, Prosperity and Freedom.

Congratulation Slovenia ! God bless you and keep you forever.