



OUR STORY

NAŠA ZGODOVINA



Canadian Slovenian Historical Society ~ Vol. 11 ~ Spring 2021

SLOVENIA ~ Celebrating 30 years of Independence

Putting Slovenia on the Map

Reflections on Slovenia's Independence:
A Toronto Perspective
by Dorothy Lenarčič

At first it was exciting. Then suddenly, it was alarming.

After years of economic and political turmoil in post-Tito Yugoslavia, Slovenia democratically voted to become an independent state. Pride and celebration quickly morphed into shock, as Yugoslav tanks rolled out.

It was in these circumstances that I joined concerned Canadian Slovenians in the church hall of Marija Pomagaj in Toronto. How could we help our relatives back home? One way was to draw attention to the dire situation and win support from our fellow Canadians and government. We would get the message across through the media. Having worked in public relations and marketing, I volunteered for the task.

Immediately, Leander Skof and I established the Slovenian Information Centre. I lived close to Brezmadežna parish in west Toronto and there was a room available for an office on the property. Telephone and fax lines were installed. There was no internet, no email, no social media back then. It was a slow process researching, writing press releases, phoning and faxing media organizations.

Media were interested in the local angle, wanting to know who we were (Slovakia? Slavonia?) where and how many of us - anything about Slovenians in the Toronto region. I provided background information and community contacts who provided comment and context.

I recall expressing concern about the protest planned for the provincial legislature, Queen's Park, because leaders didn't want to have it on a weekday. Understandably, Slovenians wouldn't want to miss work, but it was when politicians, people and traffic would be there and take notice. On Saturday it would

be completely quiet. We would need a significant crowd to compensate. Members of the Croatian community joined us and with signs, speeches and song, we gained the air time I'd hoped for. Similarly, I was pleased with the turnout and coverage we received at Toronto City Hall for a vigil honouring those who died in the violence in Slovenia.

Convincing downtown media to drive 45 minutes out of the city, on a Sunday, to the Slovensko Letovišče, I still shake my head when I think back to that challenge. As television is about visuals, I emphasized this was the biggest event of Slovenians in Canada, highlighting our cultural heritage through dance, song and costume, ideal for the cameras. Also, we had a cabinet minister from the government of Slovenia who would be speaking, adding importance to the day. To clinch it, there would be plenty of home made Slovenian food to be enjoyed by reporters. In an era before GPS and Google Maps, I made certain accurate instructions and map drawings were sent. Thankfully, the day of the event was sunny and warm. The four major stations sent crews to cover us and we were all over the television news that night. Mission accomplished.

As quickly as the crisis in Slovenia began, it was over. A ceasefire was declared and calm prevailed. Behind the scenes work would continue, with fundraising and eventually diplomatic recognition by Canada. My time at the Slovenian Information Centre came to a close by the end of July.

I look back on that summer as one in which we all came together, groups and club affiliations, young and old, to support a monumental event in our history. Finally, our cultural heritage could be identified on a map, an **independent country called Slovenia.**



Jože Slobodnik

G. Jože Slobodnik je v preteklem letu praznoval 80. letnico svojega rojstva. Za ta jubilej je ga. Marija Ahačič Pollak zbrala njegove življenjske podatke in jih spretno ubesedila v biografijo, ki je izšla lanskega septembra, a zaradi sedanjih razmer ni bila javno predstavljena, kot je bilo zamišljeno. Jožeta domala pozna vsakdo v slovenski diaspori, ne samo v Torontu, ampak po vsej Kanadi, saj je deloval in sodeloval na področjih javnega, družbenega in gospodarskega življenja, kar je predstavljeno na stotih oziroma dve stotih straneh dvojezične knjige. Opremljena je z neštetimi fotografijami, ki nazorno dopolnjujejo besedilo. Prof. dr. Janez Bogataj, slovenski etnolog svetovnega slovesa, je zgodbo g. Jožeta uvrstil med izjemne, saj je pri vseh svojih uspehih tudi dejavno in podporno ostal zvest svojim koreninam. Prof. dr. Anton Stres, nekdanji ljubljanski nadškof, ugotavlja, da je g. Jože "vzorčni primer" poslovne uspešnosti vodene s korporacijsko družbeno odgovornostjo v svobodnem okolju in pri tem ne izključuje svoje pripadnosti narodnosti in politično odgovornost za državo ali svoje katoliške vere. Dr. Rozina Švent, bibliotekarka v NUK-u, pa v svojem uvodniku poudarja njegovo lojalnost in vsestransko dobrodelnost. V svojem javnem in osebnem življenju je g. Jože navezal neštete stike in nekatera so se razvila v močna prijateljstva. Dr. Božo Cerar, veleposlanik RS v Kanadi od leta 1997 do 2001, se je z njim srečal kmalu po svojem prihodu na novo službeno mesto. Kaj hitro je opazil njegova vsestranska prizadevanja pri graditvi medsebojnih odnosov in ga je prav zato predlagal za častnega konzula RS. G. Jožetu je hvaležen za njegov doprinos v diplomatski službi, ki je gotovo veliko pripomogel tudi k uspehu njegovega veleposlaniškega mandata, še bolj pa ceni njegovo iskreno prijateljstvo do današnjih dni. Enako se g. Jožeta s hvaležnostjo in zahvalo spominja g. Tomaž Kunstelj, sedanji veleposlanik RS v Italiji, ki je od leta 2006 do leta 2011 v isti funkciji zastopal Slovenijo v Kanadi.

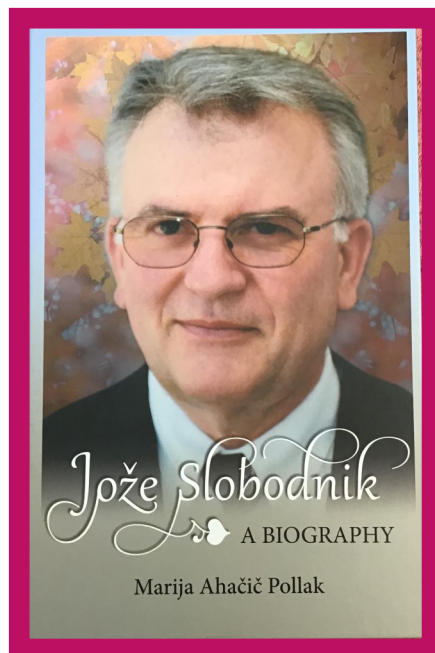
Občuduje ga tudi kot vdanega očeta svojih otrok in ljubečega moža soproge Darje, ki ga je vsa leta tako nesebično podpirala pri vseh podvigih in mu stala ob strani. Pohvalno se izraža tudi Vince Ciccone, partner in predsednik TGM, ki je v njem našel mentorja in vizionarja v tem tako hitro rastočem tehnološkem svetu. Svojo pripombo je pripisal tudi prof. dr. Laurence Hewick, direktor razvoja GFBI, ki ga je srečal v njegovih poslovnih prostorih, kjer je občutil spoštljive, družinske odnose zaposlenih do predsednika in obratno, kakor v prijateljskem krogu, kjer se je odražala prisrčnost in domačnost. Značaj g. Jožeta se ni kalil v akademskih druženjih, ampak je sad pristne, poštene, delavne in preizkušane belokrajnske kmečke družine.

G. Jože je knjigo posvetil svoji družini, saj pravi, da brez njih ne bi bil to, kar je.

~ Milena Sorsak ~

*Knjigo lahko nabavite v pisarnah župnij v
New Torontu in Hamiltonu.*

*Izkopiček je namenjen radiu Glas Kanadskih
Slovencev.*



RECAP OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Canadian Slovenian Historical Society (CSHS) held its 17th annual meeting on Saturday February 13, 2021. Due to our provincial lockdown restrictions, the meeting was held online via the Zoom application. With 23 members registered and quorum confirmed, CSHS board president, Mario Ulčar, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants including Mr. Blaž Slamič, the new Chargée d’Affaires at the Embassy of Slovenia in Ottawa. Following the opening remarks, the meeting’s agenda, sent to all members registered in advance, was approved along with the minutes from the 2020 annual meeting which were read by Stephanie Schaeffer, CSHS board secretary.

The main part of the AGM dealt with the various reports that summarized the core work and activities of the CSHS throughout the past year. Board vice-president, Mary Rožmanc, reported on behalf of the Board that the archival activities continued throughout the year despite the challenges of not having physical access to our premises at DOM LIPA due to the COVID-19 shutdown. CSHS board members, however, still managed to amass approximately 1350 hours of volunteer time related to CSHS initiatives. We also welcomed Heather Gardiner as our new archivist at the start of 2020. Heather has over 20 years of archiving experience and is also the full-time archivist at Women’s College Hospital in Toronto.

- ◆ A major activity that was undertaken early in 2020 was the planning and organizing of a remembrance event marking the 75th anniversary of the “Slovenian Exodus – 1945”. However, with the onset of the global pandemic, the initial date of April 2020 had to be postponed and is now tentatively scheduled for September 2021. A lot of time and effort has been put into this project and 600 booklets providing a summary of the “Exodus” have already been printed.
- ◆ The “ORAL HISTORIES” program continued in a somewhat limited capacity due to COVID-19 but with Facetime/Skype technology, virtual interviews replaced the live video format and Canadian Slovenians from Quebec, Saskatchewan and even the Yukon were able to tell their story for our archives.
- ◆ During the year, we continue to digitize the assortment of slides, photos and other records that are provided or donated to us.
- ◆ There was some archival training undertaken under the auspices of the Archives Association of Ontario pertaining to the “Rules for Archival Description” which help us when identifying, preserving and describing material of long-term value.
- ◆ With thanks to past president, Jožica Vegelj, CSHS still maintains its library in Hamilton at St. Gregory the Great Church but it is currently closed due to the provincial lockdown.
- ◆ The CSHS website www.slovenianhistorical.ca is managed by Mario Ulčar and, as board president, he represents the CSHS at the various community meetings including those of the All-Slovenian Cultural Committee (VSKO) and the Slovenian Co-ordination Committee Niagara.
- ◆ Our community networking is also enhanced by the use of social media. Stephanie Schaeffer, CSHS board member and recording secretary, manages the Facebook page, as

well as the CSHS Instagram account. She tries to create new posts and content each week and actively finds ways to encourage the younger generation to follow the social media pages and engage with our historical society’s mission and vision.

In her “Secretary’s Report”, Stephanie Schaeffer outlined the number and location of monthly meetings in the past year. Again, due to COVID-19 restrictions, only two monthly meetings and the 2020 AGM were held in person at our DOM LIPA location, and then after March six meetings were held virtually online via Zoom.

The third report was presented by CSHS treasurer Anne Žagar. She clearly summarized the financial standing and explained the key figures comprising our revenue and operating expenses for the past fiscal year. Understandably as a result of COVID-19 conditions, both income and expenditures decreased but we were able to end the year with a positive net income of \$4,625.

After the Treasurer’s report, our new archivist, Heather Gardiner, briefly outlined her initial work in familiarizing herself with the Archives’ policies and procedures, its historical collections as well as its general layout. She also helped with digitization and acquiring other Slovenian books from the Toronto Reference Library. Once the lockdown came into effect last March, she was able to do some of her archival work remotely and also respond to various inquiries /requests coming through CSHS mail.

The last report on the agenda was presented by Mary Desanti from the Audit Committee. She confirmed the completeness and attention to detail found in their review of the CSHS books and financial records for the 2020 fiscal year and she thanked the treasurer for her diligent and conscientious work.

All the above-noted reports were adopted as presented and duly recorded as approved.

The fifth item on the agenda involved board of director “ELECTIONS”. This year, the term of office expired for Mary Desanti, Mary Rožmanc and Stephanie Schaeffer. All three were recommended for re-election by the nomination committee, all three accepted, and as there were no other candidates, all three were returned to the CSHS board for another three-year term.

After the director elections, Mr. Blaž Slamič, the newly appointed Slovenian Chargée d’Affaires in Ottawa introduced himself and briefly spoke about his recent transfer and acclimatization from the warm climate of Brazil to the cold Canadian winter. He indicated he is looking forward to learning about our Canadian Slovenian organizations and being of service to them. He also mentioned that Canada will most likely have a new ambassador from Slovenia installed by June to coincide with Slovenia’s 30th anniversary of independence.

As the open forum portion of the annual meeting came to a close, board president Mario Ulčar thanked everyone who participated in this year’s virtual AGM and expressed hope that next year, we will be able to reconvene in person.

~ Peter Markes ~

OUR VISION and MISSION STATEMENT

VISION:

*To preserve the records of Slovenian immigration, cultural heritage and continued contributions to Canada and establish the legacy as **Canadian Slovenians** for future generations.*

MISSION:

Canadian Slovenian Historical Society will:

- ◆ archive and preserve the history of Slovenian immigration, its evolutionary heritage and contributions to Canada;
- ◆ gather, record, maintain and augment relevant collections of artifacts reflecting Slovenian cultural traditions, practices and contributions;
- ◆ establish, save and maintain a collection of publications, reports and manuscripts in digital, printed and oral format from Slovenian sources/organizations across Canada;
- ◆ promote academic and literary research of *Canadian Slovenians* in Canada;
- ◆ create/build a display setting of museum format for archives and artifacts;
- ◆ raise awareness, provide access and promote education of the workings and relevance of the CSHS, and strive for community engagement.

UP COMING EVENTS

SLOVENIAN EXODUS -1945

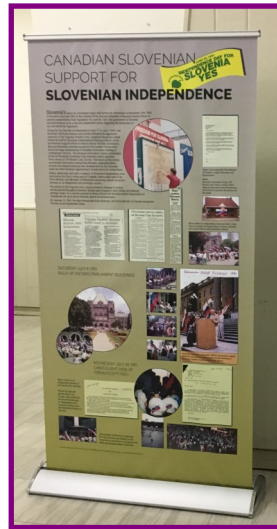
~ tentative September 2021

Vesele velikonočne praznike



We welcome your personal experiences, photos, or opinions regarding the 30 years of Slovenia's independence.

Please submit these to: ourstorymcek@gmail.com



HVALA ~ THANK YOU

CSHS appreciates everyone's support.

Your generous donations assist in the preservation of Canadian Slovenian heritage.

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