

Branko Malesevic



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One story

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Kukulje - a village near Vrbas River

The village stretches along the course of the Vrbas River, 10 kilometers upstream from the town of Srbac, where the seat of the municipality is located. According to the 2011 census, there are 842 inhabitants, of which 85% are Serbs. It is 26 km away from Banja Luka, the capital of Republika Srpska. The home of the Malesevic family was located on the very bank of the river. The family consisted of 11 members:

Father Đurađ, born 1900, mother Milka 1899, brothers Dušan 1928, Žarko 1931, Vasilije 1935, Branko 1937, Milovan 1941 and Radovan 1945, as well as sisters Zdravka 1926, Nada 1930 and Stojanka 1938.

Brother Dušan died in war 1944, together with uncle Dragutin, our father's only brother, not far from the family home.

The memories from Kukulje are mostly related to the wartime, in which the whole family spent many days and nights, often in snow-covered forests, in shelters in front of the enemy, which is why I am reluctant to remember those events.

The family moved to Vojvodina at the end of 1945, to the village of Hetin.

The trip to Vojvodina was organized by train, most often in freight cars, and since it was the end of the year, i.e. winter time, it was extremely uncomfortable and cold, so they lit a fire to warm themselves.

There were many small children in the wagons, like the brothers Radovan, who was less than a year old, and Milovan, who was 4 years old.

In addition, there were also domestic animals in the wagon, mostly goats and sheep, which provided the minimum of necessary food - milk for children and the sick, of which there were a large number.

In some places, the railways and the bridges were destroyed, so ferry was used to cross the rivers, which contributed to the journey taking so long.

We set off on our journey in December of 1945 and arrived in Hetin in January 1946.

Great joy was brought to all of us by the dog Sharov, whom we left with a neighbor, and who appeared in front of the house in Hetin after a month. How he managed to find us remained unknown forever, which was talked about for a long time in the village and the surrounding area.

Hetin - a new life on a new and unknown land

The family settled in the village of Hetin, right on the Romanian border, near Srpska Crnja, which at that time was the seat of the municipality, and is by itself next to the border, opposite the Romanian town of Zombolj.

Between Crnja and Hetin is the village of Radojevo (formerly: Klarija), also on the very border.

Just as Crnja's closest neighbor on the Romanian side is Zombolj, Radojevo's is Keča and Hetin's Otelek. The distance between these interstate neighbors is only a few kilometers, much closer than any village on Yugoslavian side.

Being on the border means being far from one's own, abandoned and neglected. While Radojevo and Crnja were connected by road and railway, Hetin had no traffic connections with the interior of the country, only a summer country road to these two nearest villages, which in rainy weather and during winter travel was impossible or very difficult.

The village didn't even have electricity, except for two hours in the evening, before going to bed.

The village actually had a road, but facing Timisoara, and when determining the border with Romania after the First World War, no one took into account how it would affect the life of the village. That part of the road, only a few hundred meters long to the border, fell into disrepair over time and it was as if it had never existed.

Life in the village was very difficult and everyone who could was looking for a way to escape from there as far as possible. The village once (1948) had 2268 inhabitants and now (2022) only 327 live in it, most of them elderly.

Before the war, this village had about 1,300 inhabitants, exclusively German and Hungarian.

Immediately after the end of World War II, the colonists moved into the houses that the members of the German nation (Volksdeutsche) had left.

There were many children in each settler family, so that the school, which was built for the needs of families with one or two children, as was usual for the natives, suddenly became too small, so that classes took place in two or three shifts, in special departments for Serbs and Hungarians.

The Hungarian neighbors accepted the newcomers with a certain amount of mistrust, but still helped guide them to a new way of life that was typical for Vojvodina, such as preparing food, baking bread, how to cook stew and the famous Vojvodina soup.

The Serbs quickly accepted and got used to the new life, and how could they not - they get used to the good quickly and easily.

Some immigrants from remote areas of Bosnia, watched a football match for the first time. They didn't understand the game, so they commented each in their own way, including the remark of one observer, which will go down in anecdotes:

Just look at how, like children, they fight for a ball. Why don't they give everyone one so they don't chase each other in the field!

The village was founded by Hungarians, in the middle of the 18th century, who engaged in the production of tobacco, for which Hetin was widely known. Our family also engaged in that business because it brought good income. In addition, sunflower, sugar beet, castor and corn were the main agricultural products.

All members of the Malešević family worked together, everyone had their own job, according to their abilities and age. My duty was to look after two cows and several sheep, feeding the poultry and similar smaller and easier jobs. As I grew up, I got more work and new tasks like the rest of the housemates.

We progressed quickly, so we soon became one of the wealthier families in the village.

But it doesn't last long. It started with the establishment of rural agricultural cooperatives, modeled after the Sovkholozes and Kolkholozes in the USSR.

A large number of (more successful) householders did not want to join and become a member of the cooperative, because they did not see anything promising in it, which turned out to be true after just a few years when that collectivization was abandoned.

The coercion applied by the authorities to the peasants to join the cooperative was very rigorous. The prisons were full of "kulaks" and "enemies of the people", including our father. However, in the end, he gave in, because after "obligations" to the state, families were often left without food - he saw that any resistance was futile.

After a few years, the cooperatives disbanded. Of the imported agricultural tools, machines and livestock, we got back only a small part and not what used to belong to the household.

By the way, life in Hetin, in addition to the above, also had many problems in the early 50s due to the conflict caused by the split with the USSR - better known as the time of the Informburo.

Incidents at the border have become almost daily, including kidnappings of our citizens by Romanian border guards and even the killings of our soldiers on guard.

The insecurity, in addition to all the other bad conditions for life in the village, made many residents decide to go inland. Thus, for the first time in the village, a decrease in the number of inhabitants was recorded, which will never stop until these days.

The father decided to sell the house, which he was not happy to "inherit" from the expelled owners, often saying, based on the experience of losing his own house in the war, that someone else's house does not bring happiness to anyone. The family moved to Klek, a village near Zrenjanin, where descendants of Đurađ Malešević, fourth and fifth generation, still live there today.

Srpska Crnja

As for me, I lived in Hetin for the first four years, until finishing primary school. I continued my education in Srpska Crnja (junior high school) for another four years, staying in a school dormitory and helping my family in the countryside during the summer.

Back then, it was rare, at least as far as Hetin was concerned, for someone to continue their education after primary school, so only 5-6 students of my generation took advantage of that opportunity.

After Srpska Crnja, it was necessary to decide what to do next.

It was a turning point in determining what one wants to do with one's life.

There were various schools for professional and craft professions, and some continued their education in a high school.

Srpska Crnja is otherwise recognizable for the fact that the poet and visual artist Đura Jakšić was born there.

Despite the fact that it was the seat of the municipality, Srpska Crnja was actually one large Banat village.

Belgrade

My goal was to become independent as soon as possible and escape from the village, so I spent some time in Belgrade. Before the trip, my father gave me the address of a friend in Belgrade, whom I should contact for accommodation and instructions about the big city.

I remember his advice, which, like any father, wants to draw his child's attention to the dangers in the unknown world:

Do not go into the ground alive, do not climb high and do not enter the deep. In translation, it would be something like: don't enter mines, don't climb tall buildings and don't enter deep waters.

My father's friend received me nicely, explained where the schools in the city that interested me are located, as well as the dangers of city traffic.

I first tried to enroll in the industrial school "Ivo Lola Ribar" in Železnik near Belgrade.

I didn't succeed, because I was marked as a "son of a kulak" in the characteristics that were then the criteria for eligibility at school or at work.

The next attempt was the Hospitality School, in Jug-Bogdanova Street in Belgrade. I was rejected again for the same reason, and with the intention of enrolling as a tailor.

Zrenjanin

Disappointed, but not discouraged, on the way back I stayed in Zrenjanin, where I learned that a Hospitality school was opening in that town, so I tried to enroll there as well.

There were more applicants than the school intended to enroll, so they asked if anyone would like to go to Subotica, where the same school was also located, but with less interest due to the fact that the city was located far on the outskirts of the country, on the very border with Hungary.

Students tended to go to schools closer to where they lived, which in my case was much further from Zrenjanin, where I was accepted.

I was adamant about going to Subotica anyway, citing as a reason that I wanted more independence, rather than being closer to my parents which they accepted, and so at the end of October 1953, I found myself in our northernmost city.

Subotica

The majority of the population, at that time, was Hungarian, which did not bother me because I had already learned some of Hungarian in Hetin. In this school, there was a recommendation to learn Hungarian in addition to the mandatory German language, because communication with guests is inevitable in the hospitality industry, and most of the guests were Hungarians.

Daily socializing with Hungarian colleagues at work and at school made me very quickly able to speak and write without problems - a language that has no similarities to any other language in the world.

In that language learning, there were also laughable situations, but always with the good intention to help.

I used every opportunity to address the Hungarians in Hungarian.

So one day I entered the school's restaurant's kitchen, to ask the chef, aunt Margita something for lunch, and I said:

Margit néni, édes vagyok! (Aunt Margita, I'm hungry)

Aunt Margita laughed and said: Ó, nem tudtam!

Actually, I said: Aunt Margita, I'm cute!

And she answered me: Oh, I didn't know!

Instead of édes I should have said éhes.

I loved Subotica and still today it's one of my fondest memories.

Because it's location is so close to the border it has preserved much of the Austrian-Hungarian culture and charm. That makes it a very special and interesting city in which to live or visit.

After the First World War, when this city became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), Subotica had more inhabitants than both Belgrade and Zagreb.

Because it is on the border, on the outskirts of the country, it grew slowly. This helped to preserve much of its charm.

Kindness in dealing with others, behavior in a public place or in society, is present in all occasions.

Traveling by open tram from the city to Palić will remain in the memories of everyone who had the opportunity to experience it.

I rarely went from Subotica to Hetin during the school holidays, to visit my parents and family, because it was quite far.

I used that free time to work, replacing older colleagues on vacation, as much for practice, and even more for good earnings.

Several times in their letters they mentioned that I had not visited for two years and asked when I would come.

I came to visit on the first days of the school holidays, at the end of June.

My family and many others were happy to see me, but there was also envy among my former friends from elementary school, that I look

"so gentlemanly", while some girls were competing to be closer to me, asking how it is in the city where I go to school.

I told them about the theaters, cinemas and tram ride to Palić, the zoo...

And the guys were jealous and looking for a way to "bring me down" in front of the girls. One day, they invited me to play football next to the playground, which was surrounded on all four sides by deep canals full of water, which serves as an obstacle so that the cows and sheep that grazed in the nearby meadow would not cross and damage the football field, which happened before on a few occasions.

Naive, I did not expect what my former friends prepared for me.

A neighbor had a little lamb, which was named Mishko, with whom I also played when I was visiting two years ago. However, now Mishko was a large and strong ram, trained by the boys to attack an unknown newcomer, suddenly and without reason, at the whistle of one of them.

Someone deliberately kicked the ball to the side where I was and of course I went after it to put it back in play.

I heard the whistle but I didn't know what was waiting for me.

The ram lunged at me, neck stiff, with horns ready to attack.

I quickly realized what was going on.

I had so much time to run away from the enraged ram, and had no choice but to head straight for the canal full of water.

At the last moment, I managed to jump over the channel, and the ram braked and stopped on the very shore.

The Mangups burst out laughing, but my success in jumping over the water-filled canal was evidently not expected by them, and they were therefore disappointed because the trick did not work out quite as they wished.

Those canals around the playground were full of water that day, because it had been raining for several days, and otherwise they were never completely without water. Usually, the upper half of the canal bank was wet and soft, so the boys competed to see who could jump the canal from bank to bank, without fear of falling into the water if they failed.

No one has ever managed to jump the channel from coast to coast, only I did, thanks to Mishko the ram, thereby confirming the old truth that a man can do much more when faced with danger than he would do under normal circumstances.

The mangups claimed that Mishko "pushed" me a little.

After a few years, at brother Vasa's wedding, we met again and reminisced about that event.

There was no need for an apology, because we all understood that that boyish mischief was not malicious, and they confirmed to me on that occasion that my record still stands.

Becej

I spent one whole summer on an internship in Bečej, a picturesque town on the banks of the Tisza River.

Before leaving, Tihomir Bata Ognjanov, famous national football team player, then Spartak player, and the manager of the UNION store in the center of Subotica, whom I knew and he knew me, because I often bought chocolates and sweets from him

When I told him that I was going to Bečej to spend a couple of months on an internship there, he told me that if I needed an apartment, I should contact his aunt, who had a house in Sinđelićeva Street, number 10 (if I remember correctly).

He had already informed his aunt that I was coming to her apartment, and told her to give me the room he used when he was visiting her.

And so it was.

It so happened that f.k. "Partizan" from Belgrade was on preparations in Bečej for two weeks, and my duty was to spend the whole time with them, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

And when they went to training, I spent time with them, by standing behind the goal and catching balls together with the young goalkeeper Milutin Šoškić, doing acrobatics behind the goal, catching balls that would pass the first goalkeeper Stojanović. So I've been there for two weeks in the company of our then best club in Yugoslavia.

And here too I had a glitch with the Hungarian language:

Every day I wrote the Menu in Hungarian and Serbian, it was one of my duties during my internship at the "Belgrade" hotel.

Market day was for us "harvest day", as we waiters welcomed that day among ourselves.

The head cook, Katarina, again Hungarian, usually knew how many dishes needed to be prepared in advance, such as the Parisian and Vienna schnitzels, which were ready to be grilled when the guest ordered, without waiting for the piece of meat to be "beaten" with a wooden hammer and shape it into a schnitzel.

I mistakenly wrote on the menu: Becsei instead of Bécsi szelet, i.e. Bečej instead of Vienna schnitzel.

Many guests wanted to try "Bečej" schnitzel as something new - the orders were many times higher than the number prepared.

Katarina said - let me see what you wrote in the menu, and immediately noticed the reason for so many orders.

Instead of reproaching me, what I expected, she praised me for a good job - such a number of Viennese schnitzels had never been sold.

When the schooling in Subotica came to an end, we all received diplomas of qualified workers: waiters, cooks, pastry chefs... and were given a schedule of where everyone is going to get their first job.

Travnik - Zenica

From various parts of Yugoslavia, hotels approached our school and offered employment to newly educated young staff, with the aim of improving catering services.

I was scheduled to report to the hotel "Kolodvor" in Travnik, Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with Dragica, a cook.

This meant a big change, because we wanted to stay in Subotica or possibly somewhere in Vojvodina, maybe in Belgrade, but in Travnik, which we hardly knew where it was - it was a journey into the unknown.

And that's how it was.

We arrived late in the evening. In the morning, from the hotel window there is a view of the panorama of the city, studded with the minarets of countless mosques. It was Friday, market day, the town was full of peasants from nearby villages, who had come down from the hills and mountains and brought their goods to the market.

The call to prayer echoes from numerous minarets...

It seemed to me that I was dreaming. I looked at Dragica, I read on her face that she was disappointed and that she did not feel comfortable in this unknown environment.

Around noon, the director of the "Kolodvor" hotel received us, thanked us for "choosing" that hotel for our first employment, saying:

- I know that you come from Vojvodina, an environment that is completely different from this one, and the first impressions may disappoint you, but believe me, when you get to know the city and this people better, you will love being here. Dragica was the first to react and said that she would still like to return to Subotica, citing the distance from her parents' home as the reason. Director Meša (Mohamed) suspected such a justification, so he asked if we would like to go to nearby Novi Travnik, it is a modern and new city, a city of young people...

Dragica answered that she might consider Zenica, a modern industrial city, where our colleagues from school were assigned last year, Andraš and his Dragica, who are now a married couple.

The director did not insist anymore, but provided transportation and we arrived in Zenica late in the afternoon.

Dragica and Andraš received us nicely and spent the whole evening talking about work and the city of Zenica.

The next day we went to the Bosna River and visited some of the sights of the city. All the time we smelled the smoke and scraps coming from the iron foundry, which we did not like at all, and it was hard for us, being unaccustomed, to it.

Andraš and Dragica noticed that we didn't want to stay there, so without further discussion on the subject, we got on the train to Vinkovci and on to our Subotica in the evening.

Backa Palanka

After a few days, Dragica got a job in Subotica, together with another namesake. I and the (then) boyfriend of the third Dragica, chef Ante, were assigned to a new destination - Bačka Palanka, hotel "Belgrade".

Two years prior, I stayed in Bačka Palanka on the way to Srem, where we visited wineries as part of the school's program to learn about wine production.

I liked the unusually beautiful nature and surroundings of Bačka Palanka - the Danube and the lakes next to it, forests, and the view of Fruška Gora.

I gladly accepted that schedule and Bačka Palanka, where I found my first job, later started a family and built a family house, gained a nice professional and social career.

Right from the beginning, Ante in the kitchen and I in the restaurant, we created order and introduced many innovations in the hotel business, which had a positive effect on the overall business of the company, and we were, of course, happy about that achievement and the employers and guests were satisfied.

After some time, Ante said that he was going to Subotica to visit his girl Dragica, with whom he intends to marry soon.

He asked me on that occasion what he should say to "my" Dragica.

I said without much thought: tell her that I drowned in the Danube!

I said that jokingly and I thought my friend would understand it that way, but Ante conveyed the message quite seriously, the way he heard it, without comment. He delivered that message in front of the staff at our school's hotel, many of whom burst into tears, at the exact moment when a girl, Maria, from Hetin, who worked as a housekeeper for the colonel's uncle in Subotica, and who came to see me before going to visit her parents, the neighbors of the Malešević family, which she always did and at the same time she carried letters and small gifts from me and vice versa.

Maria, saddened with what she heard and saw, went to Hetin and told her mother that she did not have the heart to convey this news to my parents and family. Sophia, Mary's mother, did it.

One can only guess how it affected the mother, father, brothers and sisters. Only my father received the news with reserve. Maybe that's not even true. Every day, he read the Novi Sad Daily, in which such news is regularly published. And he didn't find anything about it in the newspaper.

He went to the post office and sent return telegrams to all the Police stations, who could know anything about me, because I hadn't contact them for several months and I had changed so many places of residence.

I was working in the restaurant of the "Belgrade" hotel as usual, when around noon, I see the official of the railway station coming across the parking lot, who often, when he saw off the trains, stopped by for coffee and a glass of plum brandy. However, this time he hands me some paper and says here you have a telegram from your father, tell me what to answer.

I was taken aback and surprised by such a turn of events.

I look at the telegram: Dear son, I believe you are alive and well, answer now. I didn't know what it was about, but I did as the head of the station told me, to which he left and immediately sent a reply, and only then did he come and order coffee and brandy. No words about the previous meeting.

Ante returned from Subotica, he told me that he had delivered the message and that everyone was crying even himself (acting to make it more believable).

Only then did I understand the reason for the telegram my father had sent.

I immediately went to visit my parents, explained how it happened, but almost everyone in the village already blamed the girl Maria for spreading false news about all this. Of course, I discovered the real culprit - myself and the unintentional helper Anto.

This experience had an effect on me and I learned that even the most ordinary, harmless joke, if taken wrongly, can cause a lot of suffering and pain. That's the nature of this telling.

The very next year, I met my future wife.

And where would it be, if not at my workplace, where I spent the most time, due to being busy with work and business reorganization.

Anka and her sister-in-law saw off her brother to return to the army after his paid leave.

They were sitting with the drinks I served, talking, waiting for the train that would arrive soon.

We exchanged a few looks that said more than countless words.

I asked when I would have the opportunity to serve them again...

I didn't wait long for that opportunity. We met in a pastry shop, on walks by the river and on the beaches of the blue Danube and Lake Tikvara.

Her noticeable modesty promised me that she would be a good wife, mother and housewife. And so she was.

Our family grew fast - three children - and we needed a roof over our heads.

And that came true in 1966-67.

With great sacrifices and a lot of work, we built our own house - small but full of children's laughter and the satisfaction of having our own roof over our heads. Anka's brothers and cousins and our friends helped us in this.

No charge, of course.

The children (sons Branko and Dušan, daughter Branka) grew up,

Anka took care of all of us, and I progressed in the service, performing all the most responsible duties in the company:

Restaurant manager, hotel manager, inspector - business controller, company secretary, chairman of the board of directors ...

I have performed all the tasks in my jurisdiction conscientiously, I have never falsely accused or punished anyone, caused any offense or harm to anyone.

And I helped many people in various ways: employment, instructions, advice...

And that's how Backa Palanka remembers and respects me.

Windsor

When the opportunity arose, legally, I came with my family to Windsor, at the invitation of Anka's father, Jano Kovac, who arrived in Canada via Italy and Norway, ten years earlier.

On May 15, 1969, we arrived late in the evening by plane from London to Toronto. And immediately, on the first day, we learned what a workers' strike means and its consequences in practice.

The flight to Windsor was canceled due to the strike, so we had to call Anka's brother Samuel, who came to Canada two years ago, to come by car to pick us up.

It was very tiring to wait 4 hours, then four more to get to Windsor.

Tiredness from the long journey and the 6-hour time difference required a long sleep and rest.

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We started a new life in a new country on May 16, 1969.

After a few days, we set out to get to know the city.

Anka's father's house was only a block and a half, or about 200 meters away from the river that divides Canada and the USA - the Detroit River.

We walked and lingered for quite a while enjoying the view of the skyscrapers and contours of the city of Detroit and the beautifully landscaped riverfront on the Windsor side. We liked Windsor at first sight.

We asked around and found out that all schools from elementary to university are within a few blocks, which was very important to us because of the children.

At the suggestion of a friend, a captain of the Yugoslav royal army, we enrolled the children in summer school so that they could learn the language and be ready for classes in English by autumn.

The same friend suggested that I also enroll in an English language school, with a scholarship sufficient for the basic needs of the family.

I accepted. Anka quickly got a job in a company where her sister-in-law worked, and the owner was a Serb from Romania. All employees spoke Serbian and that made it easier to communicate at work.

When I finished the English language course, I received a recommendation from the school to continue my education in college, according to the program then in force for new immigrants, at the expense of the state. I successfully completed that and earned a diploma in bookkeeping and accounting (Business administration).

Canada really provided us with all the conditions for a good start to life in this country. The children mastered the language very quickly and went to school in the fall for regular lectures with other students.

The house, which we bought from Anka's father, was well located, everything was close to us, a ten minute walk or less, to the very center of the city.

I got a job at Chrysler in 1971, and spent over 25 years in the paint repair department, retiring on December 1, 1995.

Employment at Chrysler and buying a house freed me from many worries and gave me the opportunity to continue my studies at ICS Montreal, Quebec, and the School for Degree Studies (Modern Management) Scranton, Pennsylvania, from 1976-1979.

I did that purely out of a desire to learn something more in the field of management, where I had a lot of experience working in Yugoslavia.

I had no need to look for another job with my newly acquired qualifications, because at Chrysler I had a very good salary and benefits, as well as an easy and clean job.

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On August 10, 1972, our third son, Zoran, was born.

A full house, a real family atmosphere.

Zoran enjoyed many privileges as the youngest member of the family, and he entertained us all with his childish play.

Until the time he started school, I changed my shift to work in the afternoon, until mom came home from work, so he was with one of his parents the whole time.

We spent weekends together, and during the summer we often went on nature trips, (Point Peele, Holiday Beach) or one of the many parks in Windsor. In the winter, we visited relatives and friends.

For the first few years, I must admit, I suffered from homesickness at times. I was brought up and raised in the belief that the motherland always comes first, and I often wondered if I had made a mistake by leaving my native land for the sake of a better life.

With the birth of my son Zoran and the acquisition of Canadian citizenship, I finally got rid of that nightmare.

The events that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia only confirmed the correctness of such a decision.

Grandchildren (4) also arrived and that's how we anchored in Canada.

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For consolation, I tried to preserve my Serbian citizenship, but I ran into bureaucratic obstacles, which required me to first deregister from the citizenship of Bosnia and Herzegovina, supposedly where I belong (by birth) after the breakup of Yugoslavia, and then submit an application to the Serbian authorities for citizenship .

The fact that I lived in Serbia for 24 years, that I finished all my schools in Serbia, served my military service, where my children were born and where I had a family home and worked for more than 10 years - is not respected.

In the Consulate of Bosnia and Herzegovina, they say that I do not exist anywhere in the records, and that therefore I do not have citizenship there from which to deregister!

Now, when someone asks me what I am (meaning citizenship) I can only say what I am - Canadian.

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Schism among Serbs

Around 1965, years before coming to Windsor, I read in the papers and heard on the news that in America and Canada there was a big schism in the Serbian church and among the Serbs.

It didn't interest me much. I wasn't even sure what the word "schism" meant. I had no idea that in just a few years I would find myself in the very center of that schism, and later become a victim of that unfortunate division.

Immediately after arriving in Windsor, many with whom I came into contact tried to present themselves as being on the right side of the divide, that the others were to blame.

I heard that from both sides, as if they were trying to win me over to their side. I quickly realized that joining any of the parties would mean that I was also a participant in the division, which is why I remained "neutral".

Being neutral does not mean being disinterested in your community.

Precisely because of that neutrality, and not burdened by the obligations of affiliation and consistency of any party, I had the opportunity to see things much more clearly, what are the needs of the community and how to discover and solve them.

The first opportunity to get involved was around the unification of two Serbian sports clubs, "Serbia" and "Maple Leaf" in 1973.

The aforementioned division and schism among the brothers left numerous consequences that needed to be resolved.

But in conditions where neither side would give in and renounce its dogma, it was impossible to implement any agreements, if there were any at all.

I have noticed that the solution lies in finding people on both sides that are independent in their opinions and willing to implement it.

My role was decisive in that.

I formed a group of representatives of the "Serbia" club, which consisted of: Milan Prljević, Branko Malešević, Milan Drekić, Petar Jokić and Stevan Momčilović, and scheduled a meeting on the third of May 1973 with representatives of "Maple Leaf" which was held at "Daffy's Tavern & Motor in" in Amherstburg, a town around 30 kilometers from Windsor.

The host of the meeting was the owner of that restaurant, Žarko Vučinić, otherwise an influential leader of the Serbs from the "dissident side".

Since I worked for a short time at Žarko's as a bartender, he knew me and opened the meeting with the question:

"Is it good to unite with the Maple Leaf"?

I replied: It is not good for those who say "God forbid, the Serbs agree".

My answer brought an atmosphere of trust and relaxation - everyone agreed that the two clubs should unite.

Now it was necessary to choose the name of the newly founded club, and establish the basic guidelines and agreement on how the club should function.

Everything was smoothly agreed, and for the name of the club there were two or three proposals, but it was chosen to be called Windsor Serbs.

In the first round, I was elected to the board, but I gave up and proposed Milan Prljevic, thanks to whom my idea of how to form a group of representatives of "Serbia" succeeded. It wouldn't have been possible without him. I then promised and kept my promise that I would keep records of all the club's activities, help with finding sponsors, and in general about everything that would contribute to the survival and progress of the club.

However, there were individuals from both sides who hindered the work of the club, so in 1976 it fell into a crisis.

I reacted by publishing all the achieved results, confirmed by photos and documents, in a book:

Serbian Sports Club Windsor Serbs 1973 - 1976.

At the same time, I turned to our businessmen - sponsors for printing costs, explaining that we lack material support for the survival and success of the club. It was met with a positive response, the club came to life and the results were not lacking.

But after a few years, a group forcibly took over the club, bypassing the club's management or assembly.

However, the club continued to operate without visible changes in the way of doing business, and the question arose as to why it was necessary.

*

As I recorded the results of the club with a pen and camera, I also collected photos, documents and wrote down the stories of our older settlers about sports and social life in previous years.

I took the opportunity to publish a book on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the first Serbian sports/social organization, "Soko": Sports activity of Windsor Serbs 1929 - 1979.

It is the first time in general that an ethnic community has done this in Canada.

This gave me the reason to continue my research on sports and the life of Serbs in Windsor, from the arrival in Windsor in 1910 until today.

During that time, I published 20 books in total, including two about city of Windsor clubs where a few Serbs were members, namely:

Windsor Chess Club, a city Chess club with four Serbs as members, led by the best chess player and Olympian Milan Vukadinov, master Cvijan Radovanović, master's candidate Slobodan Đorđević and Branko Malešević, chess player and editor of the club's "Chess News".

Maple Leaf Cycling Club, where the young Zoran Malešević was a great talent and achieved great results, and I, as a member of the club and editor of the club's "The Maple Leaf Cyclist" bulletin.

Zoran is the only Serbian cyclist with a license from the Ministry of Sports in Windsor and probably beyond.



My contribution to The Maple Leaf Cycling Club was recognized by this Certificate of Appreciation as well as by a special note of Thank you in a book I published about the Club 1985

*A big thank you to
Branko Malešević
for this beautiful book,
with a look into
the early beginnings
and events of
The Maple Leaf Cycling Club -
a great contribution
to the history of
cycling sport in Windsor.*

*Aldo Sfalcin, President,
Maple Leaf Cycling Club, Windsor*



*10 година званични фотограф
највећег турнира школског првенства у Канади.*

*Hi, Branko
Yes, I did get the photos. Thank you so much.
You have a real talent for portrait photography.
You catch the kids when they are unaware,
and some of them look so angelic.
You should consider photography in a professional way.
The pics of the kids are so composed, in both senses of the word,
and yet they were taken in a crowded room.
Let me know how much I owe you for film, etc.
Once again I thank you, and I'll mention your name
whenever I use the photos.
John*

☆

Thanks Branko for all you have done.

Hans Jung, Canadian chess master, Kitchener, Ontario

☆

Thanks for the book, I enjoyed it.

Brought back a lot of memories and I learned a few things.

Fred Lindsay, American chess master, Ann Arbor, Michigan

☆

Thanks, Branko. You have done a great job here!

Brian Profit, BSc. Albert College, Belleville, Ontario

☆

Very well written Branko. You have a way with words.

*Yes, I am very happy you wrote this and glad you put the story
out to the chess community. Thank you.*

Colin O'Donnell, Windsor, Ontario

*

For information or comment regarding this publication:

branko_malesevic@yahoo.ca

Ово су већ сада историјски факти.

Драган Драшко, ФИДЕ мајстор, Торонто

☆

Бранко, ово си урадио супер, свака част.

Важно је што је то записано,

иначе би то засигурно пало у заборав.

Цвијан Радовановић, шаховски мајстор, Виндзор

☆

Бранко, свака част. Захваљујем се за све што си урадио за

Српску шаховску асоцијацију током ових других година,

од оснивања па до ових дана.

Ољег Пајкић, председник Српског шаховског удружења, Торонто

☆

*Хвала ти на труду који си годинама улагао да се сачувају подаци
за будуће генерације. На млађима је да наставе твој рад.*

Жарко Петковић, професор у пензији, Нијагара

☆

Хвала много, Бранко. Могу бар у своје име да захвалим за труд,

који сте свих ових година како вас познајем, улагали на

организацији турнира и развоју шаха међу нама лењим

Канађанима. Видеће се брзо да вас није лако заменити.

Живомир Машеић, шаховски мајстор, Торонто

Честитам на одличном и прецизном

документовању и презентацији.

Горан Томић, Шах - Мат Листа, Херцег Нови, Црна Гора

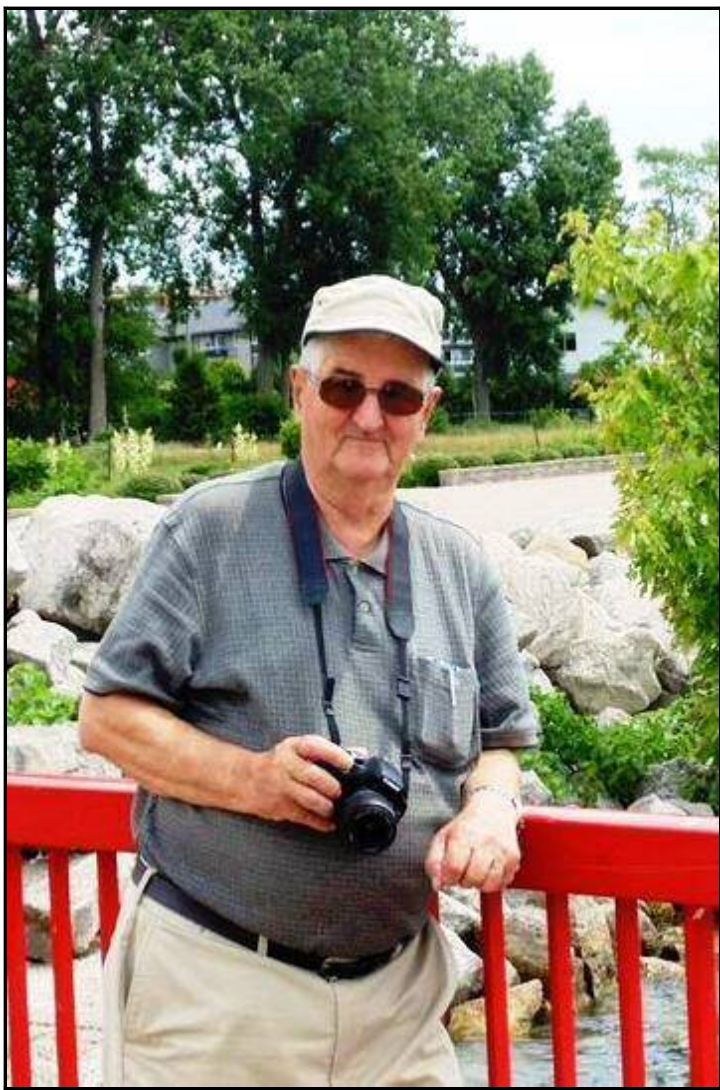
своје драго
пријатељу Бранку
у знак захвалности
за све што за Српство
ради,

аутор и његов
угодник и прија-
тељ и једномисле-
ник у многим дрм-
ственим питањима,
Владислао А. Томовић
На Видовдан 2003

Recognition by Prof. Dr. Vladislav Bata Tomovic
University of St. Catherines, Ontario



Jano (John) Kovac, Anka`s father, man who couldn`t read or write, came to Canada via Italy and Norway 1950`s, working for minimal wages all his life, brought his two sons and a daughter with their families to Windsor



Branko Malesevic / Photo by: Doug Bell

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SAWS

Since 1973

SPORTS ACTIVITIES OF WINDSOR SERBS

COLLECTING - RECORDING - PUBLISHING

Branko Malesevic

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A special thank you to my friend

Doug Bell

For proofreading and suggestions



The following participated in the house covering action, from bottom to top: Samko, Branko, Nikola, Svetozar, Đura and Ferika.

Building a house at that time was a major undertaking, but teamwork and good will achieve everything.

Immediately after the great flood of 1965, many began repairing damaged homes or building new ones. So, we did.

It was a big change, from cramped apartments to a comfortable house of our own with a large yard and garden.

But we didn't stay there for long - we decided to go on a long journey, to a new - far and unknown country - Canada, for a better and safer life.

The reason for this is the state reform, which many doubted, but also the great uncertainty it brought with it.

The state opened its gates and people set off to all corners of the world.

It is estimated that at least a quarter of all Serbs live abroad.

Open borders and freedom of movement are characteristics of today, which surprises no one.



Our first home in Canada (up) and the second (down)

