

## Toronto Writer Valentina Krčmar Promotes *I Dreamt of Christmas in Croatia*

Faith, hope and devotion to the truth about Croatia

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Toronto Writer Valentina Krčmar promoted her book *Snivala sam Božić u Hrvatskoj (I Dreamt of Christmas in Croatia)* at the Croatian Heritage Foundation headquarters on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2016. Joining CHF director Mirjana Ana-Marija Piskulić to discuss the book were opinion journalist and the book's editor Damir Borovčak, the director of the Tuškanac Training and Education Centre Zdenko Mlakar and author Valentina Krčmar. The event was opened by Vesna Kukavica, the head of the CHF publishing department.

Krčmar was born in Vrbanja near Županja and grew up in Zagreb where she attended school and went on to earn a liberal arts degree at the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. She moved to Toronto with her family in 1970 where she and her husband opened a surveying business. During the Homeland War for independence she took an active role in the work of the Croatian community. She served as president (1997–1999) of the Almae Matris Croaticae Alumni (AMCA) association and at the Ramparts of Love (Bedem ljubavi) association, a chapter of which she founded in Toronto in 1990. She worked with the Red Cross, UNICEF, the UN and contributed to the Canadian press, in particular the Toronto Star and Toronto Sun dailies, with the aim of lending aid to the homeland during the war for independence. In 1993 she took part in the work of the first convention in Zagreb of the Croatian World Congress. Following its founding she served as vice president (1993–1995) of the Canadian-Croatian Congress in Toronto. From 1997 to 2000 she edited the *Hrvatski cirkular (Croatian Circular)*, renamed *Hrvatska iskra (Croatian Spark)* in 1998. She received the Order of the Croatian Interlace in 1996. She published the book *Hrvatska mojim očima i srcem (Croatia Through My Eyes and Heart)* in 2005. A writer, culture and humanitarian activist, Valentina Krčmar recently began her collaboration with the Večernji list daily newspaper and its Moja Hrvatska (My Croatia) supplement targeted to the emigrant communities.

How one ought to love their country

The opening of the event featured a surprise performance by the Još ovu noć band out of Gračani. The group performed classics like *Suza za zagorske brege*, *Vre ftičeki spiju*, *Poleg jedne velke gore*, *Popevke sem slagal*, *Vu plavem trnaci*, *Ljubav se ne trži*, *Pjevat će Slavonija*, *Fala* and *Croatia, iz duše te ljubim*.

A travelogue of sorts, *I Dreamt of Christmas in Croatia* continues on Krčmar's first book *Croatia Through My Eyes and Heart*, published in Zagreb. The first book closes with thoughts of *not* moving to Paris, while the second begins with a description of the French capital, where she learned how one ought to love one's country. The book consists of five linked sections: *Priče o ljepotama (A Tale of Beauties)*, *Putevima hrabrih (The Paths of the Brave)*, *Hrvatski biseri (Croatian Gems)*, *Naše boli i patnje (Our Pain and Suffering)* and a section bearing the indicative title *I za kraj (And Now to End)*. In the editorial notes we read that the book opens with references to the painful topics and events from Croatia's communist past: Bleiburg, Vukovar and, near the end of the book Lepoglava, Sveta Jana, Krašić and so forth. The book is illustrated with excellent photography and includes an index of names that will assist the reader in searching and reading through the diary of a best friend on a worldwide voyage.

## Historic injustice

The book's editor Damir Borovčak notes that, throughout the book, Krčmar describes the injustices in our history for which we remain responsible by our neglect of historic events, through the ignorance of them this fosters among recent generations and the continued lack of concern about these events among institutions in an ostensibly free Croatia. The author spoke of her friends in Toronto, their native regions, Croatian places, customs ... and mostly of her wish come true – Christmas in Zagreb, and of the wealth and importance of the Croatian language. Borovčak concludes by observing that the book *I Dreamt of Christmas in Croatia* depicts Krčmar's personal spiritual development and rounds off her worthy achievements, giving a personal contribution to faith, hope and devotion to the truth about Croatia.

Many prominent figures were on hand for the book presentation, including Ambassador Veselko Grubišić, Mons. Juraj Batelja, Radio Marija editor and priest Stjepan Fridl and representatives of the Večernji list daily. CHF director Mirjana Ana-Maria Piskulić passed on the greetings of Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and of state secretary at the State Office for Croats Abroad Zvonko Milas. The event closed with Christmas and New Year's greetings from the featured author Valentina Krčmar and CHF director Piskulić.

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