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STAR WEEKLY

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*How to steal a World Series game
The Doukhobors aren't all terrorists
A Thanksgiving turkey fights back*



THE
'63 CARS

A cavalcade of the new models



In the traditional way, with choral singing, Doukhobors meet to remember a persecuted Russian past.

THESE DOUKHOBORS ARE DIFFERENT

While fanatical B.C. Sons of Freedom burn houses, blow up bridges and parade in the buff, 10,000 members of the sect in Saskatchewan are making a real contribution to Canadian life

by **JEANNINE LOCKE**, *Star Weekly staff writer*

SASKATOON

■ Last May at Trail, B.C., when a federal election speech by John Diefenbaker was interrupted by disrobing female members of the Doukhobor Sons of Freedom, the Prime Minister dismissed the awesome distraction airily. "That's no novelty to me—I was raised on a homestead in Saskatchewan," he explained his sophisticated disinterest. Later, for the press, the Prime Minister interpreted the remark to be a reference to his experience with Doukhobors in his home territory of Saskatchewan. The plain implication was that it had been arduously educational. The impression left was that the whole sect, not just the slim splinter group of B.C. Sons, tended toward bizarre lawlessness.

The Prime Minister knew better. In Saskatchewan, where the sect originally settled, the tolerance of society has never been severely strained by a Doukhobor minority's practice of its beliefs. Today, the province's 10,000 Doukhobors—about the same number as in B.C.—are dispersed and so thoroughly absorbed into the general community that their elders have trouble keeping the younger generation in touch with

DOUKHOBORS *continued*

Descendants of Canada's original Doukhobors reunite to celebrate 63 years of peaceful toil

Photographs by KRYN TACONIS



The elders, never schooled, still cling to old customs, language and dress.



A new generation, born, educated here, is entirely and happily assimilated.



Four generations in the Rebin clan reflect the sect's progress from the oldtime peasant fear of education to great pride in young Norman's scholarship.

Doukhobor traditions. If the group is still conspicuous it is for industry, driving ambition for education and enlightened exasperation at both the irrational behavior of the 2,000-odd Sons in B.C. and the B.C. government's consistent record of irrational reaction to it. The remedy for the Sons' sickness, Saskatchewan Doukhobors submit, is written large in their own history in Saskatchewan.

Education, started early and sustained, is the Sons' salvation, just as it was the means by which the Doukhobors in Saskatchewan emerged from peasant fear of and hostility to the world outside their own huddled community. One of the Prime Minister's classmates at the University of Saskatchewan, Peter Makaroff, was the earliest example to his people of how education frees the Doukhobor from the limitations of life inside his own sect, without impugning his Doukhobor ethics. Makaroff, while

faithfully serving his own people, has been an intelligently active citizen of his community, province and country and a practising internationalist long before internationalism was fashionable. His generation and its children have handsomely repaid their province for its patience with a minority group ill-equipped for the 20th century.

Born in a hut in Transcaucasia, Russia, Makaroff, as a five-year-old, was brought to Canada by his parents, along with six brothers and sisters, in 1899. The Makaroff family was part of the first migration of 7,427 Doukhobors from a homeland where, since the 18th century, their sect had intermittently been in conflict with church and state. Conflict—and persecution—had begun with the Doukhobors' breaking away from the ritual of the Russian Orthodox Church. Their belief was that, since God was within His children, formal preaching, communion and prayers were unnecessary.

When the Doukhobors denied also the authority of the state—most emphatically where it involved force of any kind, even law enforcement—the Russian government punished them with flogging, exile and death. By the late 19th century about a third of the Doukhobors had abandoned suffering and accepted the controls of civil law. The big remainder revolved around Peter Vasilovich Verigin, an impressive figure of a man who was a firm believer in the inevitable conflict between good and government. From exile in Siberia, he instructed the faithful to forswear military service, meat, tobacco, alcohol and sex and, finally, to abandon their homeland. With the financial and moral support of the Russian writer, Tolstoy, and the Society of Friends—Quakers—in England, who sympathized with the sect's pacifism and religious unorthodoxy, the Doukhobors emigrated to Canada. They had been promised cheap land and guaranteed,



Peter Makaroff, the first professionally trained Doukhobor in history, says delinquent British Columbia Sons are now national – not family – problem.



by order-in-council in 1898, exemption from military service.

They took up three blocks of land in Saskatchewan, then the Northwest Territories, near Yorkton, Prince Albert and Saskatoon. There, according to instructions from Verigin in letters from Siberia, they established their first settlements on communal lines. But their Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood wasn't quite the utopia they had expected. Their ideal of "toil and peaceful life," with all men equal, was strained in practice by the simple fact that some were more ambitious workers and independent intellects than others.

By the time Verigin was allowed to join his fellow refugees at the end of 1902, some, including Peter Makaroff's father, Gregory, were finding communal life oppressive. They

were working their farms as individuals and sending their children to the schools set up by the indomitably interested Quakers from the U.S. and England. Verigin promptly forbade school attendance and ordained that the Doukhobors should not register for individual titles to their land, as required under the Homestead act. The majority was obedient, thereby losing tens of thousands of acres staked out since 1899 and gaining a grievance against the Canadian government, which Verigin knew how to exploit. A substantial number maintained independence. Gregory Makaroff, despite his wife's tears, was one.

The Makaroff family had settled on the banks of the North Saskatchewan river, 65 miles from Saskatoon, near the site of what is now the town of Blaine Lake. With the Quaker community school closed, young Peter and the children of half a dozen other independents were sent to Rosthern, 25 miles away, to the public school. It soon

Both mother and daughter find Doukhorism compatible with good Canadian citizenship.

DOUKHOBORS *concluded*

became over-crowded. The Doukhobor children walked home.

But Gregory was determined that his children would have not only "simple literacy but a whole education as well." When the U.S. Quakers proposed to place Doukhobor children as workers in farm homes near Philadelphia and provide for their schooling, Gregory decided that three of the Makaroff children—Nicholas, Tatiana and Peter—should go. Tatiana, frightened by her friends' imagining of life outside the Doukhobor community, wept until her father weakened and allowed her to stay home. "She lost her chance for learning—as so many of her generation did—and she has never forgiven herself," according to her brother, Peter, who went on to Philadelphia and, after three years, returned to a newly built neighborhood school where he became the first Doukhobor in history to advance beyond primary education.

BY THE time Peter Makaroff had graduated from high school, Verigin had led his faithful—about half the original community—to the Kootenays of B.C., where they bought land outright to avoid government interference. Their move, starting with an advance party in 1908, was precipitated by the Saskatchewan government's announcement that it would open schools throughout the Doukhobor settlements. Verigin was shrewd enough to know that he could maintain absolute authority only by keeping his people isolated by illiteracy from the outside world.

Within four years of their arrival in B.C., the Doukhobors' defiance of laws concerning school attendance and registration of births—and their neighboring fruit growers' complaints of brisk Doukhobor competition—provoked the first provincial investigation into the B.C. Doukhobor problem. The investigators found the newcomers "desirable settlers," honest, sober and industrious, and deserving of "patience" from the B.C. government. They recommended that the government try conciliation by appointing a Doukhobor as sub-registrar of births and allowing Russian—as well as English-speaking teachers—to introduce a modified Canadian curriculum into the community. They concluded that "Peter Verigin is the Doukhobor problem."

The B.C. government filed and forgot the report. It answered emphatically, "no," to Peter Makaroff's letter from Blaine Lake outlining a simple course of studies and volunteering to teach it to children of the B.C. Doukhobor community. "We do not want teachers who can speak their language," the B.C. authorities, with spectacular illogic, explained.

Peter Makaroff taught in country schools near Blaine Lake for two years, until he had saved enough money to enter law at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. There he waited on tables, won awards as a star athlete (while his classmate, John Diefenbaker, was debating) and was generally popular, despite his staunch pacifism during the war years of his campus career. In 1918 he received his law degree and opened an office in Saskatoon. Two years later he married Helen Marshall, the prettiest girl in the 1918 arts and science graduating class.

Professional training in the law of the land and marriage to a non-Doukhobor did not reduce Makaroff's stature in the eyes of his own sect. Members of his own genera-

tion, after overcoming their suspicion of state-run schools, were developing a huge hunger for learning—they enormously admired Makaroff, with his B.A., LL.B., and educated wife. The older ones marvelled at the first certified professional in the sect's 250-year history. Moreover, they were often grateful for the trained mind he brought to the troubles of the brethren both at home and in B.C.

A Verigin was still at the source of the conflict that developed sporadically between Doukhobors and their provincial governments during the 20's and 30's and it was usually Peter Makaroff who tried to interpret each group to the other, in and out of court. On the death in 1924 of Peter Vasilovich Verigin in a CPR train bombing in B.C., his son, Peter Petrovich, a dissolute and erratic man, had inherited the leadership of the B.C. community and the power still to influence a few fanatics in Saskatchewan. He was helped in his effort to keep the Doukhobors huddled by the economic depression and the hardship it brought to bewildered Doukhobor farmers in both the Saskatchewan and B.C. communities. Some of the unemployed drifted into the radical camp of the Sons of Freedom where they could find an approved outlet for their aimless hostility in schoolhouse burning and nude parades. As long as they destroyed only Doukhobor property, Makaroff noticed, provincial authorities tended to be indulgent. It was when the Doukhobors in B.C. began to trouble neighboring communities that their government immediately reacted through the RCMP. The Saskatchewan independents, although nervous at their brethren's behavior, which was always a menace to their own security, at least understood what they were doing. It was a sinking into the past, a reversion to the simplified life which, when ordained by Peter Vasilovich, had some point for Russian peasants but which was now senseless. In disrobing, they were flaunting their supremacy over the flesh to those less pure and simple in heart than Peter had proclaimed his people to be. When they were jailed, all together, the experience not only confirmed their sense of fated persecution but also strengthened their esprit de corps. Makaroff and his fellow independents in Saskatchewan marvelled: "Why don't the authorities at least disperse them in jail? Why isn't sustained treatment tried, instead of sporadic retaliation, which is what they want and which makes no effort at rehabilitation? How can this crumbling community be restored to society when its only contact is with a government, which always appears in an RCMP uniform?"

While young Saskatchewan Doukhobors were marrying legally in the traditional way, at home in the presence of parents and friends, without a minister, or, increasingly often, in the established churches to which their partners belonged, their neighbors in B.C., forbidden to practise Doukhobor marriage rites, were clinging to their old custom and concealing it by breaking another law in not registering their unions. While Peter Makaroff was running as a CCF candidate in provincial and federal elections, albeit unsuccessfully, his brothers in B.C. were deprived of their right to vote because of their refusal to do military service.

In Saskatchewan, as in B.C., during World War II, there was conflict between the patriotism of the general community and the Doukhobors' pacifism. Even without a Verigin to remind them of the belief at the core of their religion—Peter Petrovich had died in 1939 on a visit to Saskatoon—



For young Doukhobors, persecution is buried with their ancestors in the dim past.

the Doukhobors in both provinces stayed fairly united in their traditional abhorrence of force. Peter Makaroff, a member of the Saskatoon city council at the outbreak of war, preached pacifism and was defeated at the earliest civic election. His son, Bob, was kept out of medical college for a year because the chairman of the selective service board, a judge who disliked his father's politics as well as his Tolstoyan philosophy, ruled that the boy should be sent to a work camp instead. Bob could have claimed automatic exemption as a Doukhobor. But he had never joined his father's sect; he was objecting as an individual to the organized insanity that he saw in war. He was willing to serve as a non-combatant on completion of his medical training.

In the postwar years, the descendants of Doukhobors in Saskatchewan, like Bob Makaroff, have adapted to Canadian life the vital elements of their ancestors' beliefs—their emphasis on an over-riding individual responsibility to conscience, their independence of thought and their refusal to reverence form and ritual. The trappings that the Verigins had attached to Doukhoborism—vegetarianism, abstinence from tobacco and alcohol and the prohibition of music, organized recreation and almost any creative activity—the younger generation dismissed. Their ambition was for what Gregory Makaroff had called a "whole education."

GREGORY'S direct descendants are now dispersed throughout Canada and the U.S. and trained in a variety of professions—law, medicine (Peter's son and daughter are M.D.'s, as are three of their cousins), engineering, teaching, nursing and dentistry—as well as in government service, business and farming. Most are married outside the Doukhobor sect. Peter, who is still famous among fellow Doukhobors as "the first to set foot inside a high school," is also eminent in his own profession and an esteemed citizen of Saskatchewan. A Conservative government appointed him a King's Counsel in 1932. In 1945 he became the first non-Anglo Saxon to serve on the University of Saskatchewan

Board of Governors. Since 1947 he has been chairman of the Saskatchewan Labor Relations Board. He actively supports the world Federalists and the New Democratic Party. And always, if he can, he goes home to Blaine Lake to recall his Doukhobor past on St. Peter's day, June 29, the anniversary of the day in 1896 when the Doukhobors burned their guns in protest against military service. in 1895.

There is no longer any need for Makaroff to address the gathering, in a tent on the edge of town, on the necessity for education. Two hundred Doukhobors are currently registered at the University of Saskatchewan – the biggest representation of any non-Anglo-Saxon group. The mayor of Blaine Lake is a Doukhobor as are most of the town's teachers and other business and professional leaders. The 10 Doukhobors in the Blaine Lake high school graduating class are all continuing their education, eight of them at university. None is likely to return to the town. Nick Alex Popoff

The assimilation of the younger Doukhobors into Canadian life has been so easy and complete that they no longer have much understanding of the St. Peter's day speeches in Russian or share emotionally in the hymns which tell the story of their sect's long history of persecution. Their gradual disengagement from the community worries some of their elders. Others are resigned.

What young and old Doukhobors in Saskatchewan still share is a feeling of deep involvement in the fate of their delinquent brothers, the B.C. Sons. Over the years they have tried, individually and in delegations, to help the Sons to some understanding of the violence they do, not only to the law and custom of the country, but to the beliefs of their own sect. One of the most recent delegations, made up mainly of Saskatchewan university students, delivered an ultimatum: "If you continue in your senseless conflict with the government, don't call yourselves Doukhobors." The chief spokesman for the delegation, Norman Rebin of Blaine Lake, cried passionately to the assembled Sons: "Your great hope is education." The Sons seemed to awaken under the influence of the students. But when the delegation returned to Saskatoon the Sons quickly convinced themselves that the university Doukhobors hadn't been so ardently involved after all. Otherwise they'd have stayed to help in the B.C. community. "It'll take time – maybe 15 or 20 years – and patient education before the Sons are assimilated," Rebin reported to Makaroff.

Today, after 50 years and three massive investigations into the Doukhobor problem, the B.C. government still has no comprehensive program for rehabilitating the 2,000 Sons. Only in recent years has Doukhobor marriage been recognized and the franchise granted to B.C. Doukhobors, the great majority of whom are law abiding. Education, after institutional care was tried and abandoned, continues to be sporadic. "The B.C. government has always alternated between harsh discrimination and foolish permissiveness in its treatment of the Doukhobors," according to Makaroff.

One of the recommendations of the University of British Columbia Doukhobor Research Committee to the B.C. government in 1952 was that the Sons be assisted to emigrate "if opportunity should arise for them to go to a nation where their conflicts would be lessened." That solution to the problem of the Sons seems to the Doukhobors in Saskatchewan a premature admission of failure on Canada's part. Their own experience shows Doukhobors not only can adapt to Canadian life but enrich it. ●