

OLDEST REPUBLIC IN WORLD IS DESCRIBED

SAVENTIA IN CAUCASUS

New York Woman Visits Almost Inaccessible Little Nation and Tells About Her Notable Trip

What is the oldest existing republic in the world? The question is answered by Miss Pauline Ritter of New York, who has just returned from two years of service with the Near East Relief in Turkey, Russia and Persia.

"The name of this oldest republic, which very few have ever heard about, is Saventia," she told an interviewer today. "It is located among the inaccessible peaks of the Caucasus Mountains in Southern Russia, and it has been a free republic continuously for 4000 years."

Seldom Visited
Miss Ritter is one of a half dozen foreigners who have visited this "lost people." She went there in an effort to locate relatives of several Saventian children who were in the Near East Relief orphanages in Armenia.

For the past two years she has been the secretary of the overseas commission of the Near East Relief—the most important office held by any woman in the organization, and her work has meant more than 20,000 miles of travel, by railroad, steamship, automobile, stage coach, horseback and even by camel and donkey caravan.

Held up by Bandits
She was held up by armed bandits in Russia on one occasion, their shots puncturing the framework of the automobile in which she was riding, although she was fortunately unharmed. She travelled more than 1000 miles on horseback in Persia, and she risked typhus and other refugee epidemics in her relief work in Syria and Palestine.

On her return to America a few days ago she was decorated with the distinguished service medal of the Near East Relief, with a citation which reads: "After three years in the New York Administrative offices of the Near East Relief, Miss Ritter went to Constantinople as secretary of the overseas administration, and she has just completed her second year in that capacity. In Turkey, Armenia, Turkey and Palestine, she proved herself equally at home in field and office, equally cool in administrative crises or in facing the guns of hostile tribesmen, who robbed the party of which she was a member in Russia a year ago. This medal is awarded to her in special tribute to her skill, diplomacy and courage in the trying emergencies and vicissitudes of a work which has taken her across a dozen international borders and required her to meet a constant variety of tasks and problems."

Showed Heroism
The "high point" of Miss Ritter's two years of service and adventure, she said today, was her visit to Saventia. She told the story in a matter-of-fact way, although it was obvious that there was a robust heroism required of the American girl who made this unprecedented journey!

"The whole trip meant nearly four weeks on horseback," she said. "Most of the journey was over the steepest and most difficult of mountain trails. In many places the difficult stretches, with a mountaineer fore and aft to pull and push. Only a week before, four horses were lost on this same journey."

Free for 4000 Years
"The Saventians boast that they have been a free people for 4000 years. Their freedom is due in part to their racial pride and their individual bravery, but also to the impenetrability of the mountain fortress in which they live. Every one of the 30,000 people in the tribe is armed to the teeth, and they live in stone forts like no other habitations in the world—tall towers of solid rock, many of which date back countless centuries. Herodotus and other classical historians wrote descriptions of these tower-homes as they were 2000 years ago, and the nature of the tribe has changed very little since the time of Christ. Ethnologists believe that these people are descendants of the Chaldeans; they themselves trace their lineage back to Jason of the Golden Fleece; their language, according to the experts, is closer to the mother of all languages than any other. They have long since lost the written language which they once had, and of which traces are left on a few ancient monuments."

Seventy Tribes
"These mountain fastnesses of the Caucasus are inhabited by seventy distinct tribes, who are still to a large extent autonomous, and whose origins are shrouded in the mists of antiquity. They are the relics, or ruins, of ancient races. But among them all, the Saventians are the one tribe which has retained its complete individuality and freedom. The people live, as they always have lived, under their own rule, administered by a council of the elders. They adopted Christianity perhaps fifteen centuries ago, but many of their primitive heathen customs still remain, and they revere and worship as god-like, the personified qualities of love, loyalty, justice, hunting and agriculture."

"Their country is barren, and they wrest from it a precarious existence by hunting, fishing, cattle-raising and primitive agriculture. Only during the past decade have they admitted any representatives of modern civilization, and today for the first time since the beginning of their national life, the nation has a doctor, a dentist, a school, and a primitive co-operative store."

Ten Days from Railway
"From the nearest railroad station, it is about ten days of steady climbing on horseback to the border of Saventia, through a wilderness of snow-lad mountains and virgin forests. Until very recently, no outsider could enter Saventia without a special vote of permission from the Council of the Republic. It had no difficulty at the border, and after many days of barren mountains, it was good to look down into this pleasant valley, with the first Saventian village of Kala located just below me on the banks of the great Caucasian glacier."

Are Impressed
"I visited a half dozen of the villages in the course of my mission on behalf of our orphan children. After a few days, the villagers were no longer suspicious of me. They were tremendously impressed to find that Americans were caring for a group

of refugee children belonging to their tribe, and they promised to send their head men to our orphanages to select a first unit of children for repatriation. It is quite likely that this American work for their children will result in breaking down the isolation of this people and bringing them back again into a world of usefulness."

"The natives are white, with fair skins and blue eyes. They live in their stone towers, which usually have three floors, connected by ladders. The cattle and animals are stabled on the lower floor, and the household on the second story. The top floor is a store room for their grain. Their diet consists of black bread, and a dish they call hatchaqui, an odd mixture of corn meal and goat's cheese."

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TO UTILIZE RESOURCES

Vast Water Power Is Available and First Project Likely to Be Started on the Lerma River

A growing realization of Mexico's need for electric power, and at the same time of a new comprehension of this country's vast hydroelectric power sources, is noted here by George Wythe, acting United States Commercial Attache in Mexico City, writing for the monthly bulletin of the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico.

Mr. Wythe points out that additional electric energy is urgently needed in Mexico, and declares that the entire situation is being investigated by a commission of the Mex-

ican government. Hydroelectric power, he says will be developed simultaneously with the government's ambitious irrigation projects.

First Project
"The first project to be carried out," he declares, "probably will be near the headwaters of the Lerma river, in the northeast corner of the State of Michoacan, about 20 kilometers northeast of the famous mining camp of El Ore, and near the state boundary of Guanajuato."

"A masonry dam will be built and behind it will be stored 500,000,000 cubic meters of water. The preliminary work of surveying, water gauging and diamond drilling was completed last August. Instead of going to waste down the channel of the Lerma, at times causing devastating floods, these waters will supply the growing demand for electrical power in the Federal District (that is, Mexico City and its suburbs) and, through a comprehensive system of canals, to be constructed by the government, irrigate a large territory near Acambaro.

Cost Is Large
"The hydroelectric project alone will cost at least 15,000,000 pesos (approximately \$7,500,000 in American currency). The amount to be spent by the government on the irrigation system will amount to several millions of pesos."

"It is expected that the initial installation will comprise two large units of 30,000 horsepower, and this can be increased when needed by another unit of the same size. "At one point a tunnel three kilometers long will give a head of 200 meters. A high-tension transmission line, 25 kilometers long, will connect the mining camp of El Ore, now the terminus of a power line from Mexico City, to the new plant."

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