



MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF
COMMUNISM
TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY



Newsletter

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Project Update and Interview with the New DDG for Capital Interpretation and Commemorations at Canadian Heritage

Onsite work on the Memorial to the Victims of Communism has ceased for the winter season after several busy months of construction in the fall. Construction of the plinth and most of the landscaping is complete. We look forward to work beginning again soon.

Tristan Landry recently joined Canadian Heritage (PCH) as the new Deputy Director General, Capital Interpretation and Commemorations. In this capacity, he oversees the team responsible for national monuments, including the construction of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism. The following is a short interview with Mr. Landry:

1. Tell us a bit about yourself and your path to PCH?

Prior to joining PCH, I served in Canada's Foreign Service for twenty years, including five foreign assignments – San Francisco, Washington DC, Kabul, Port-au-Prince and Paris. While I really enjoyed representing Canada's interests abroad, I recently took the decision to settle more permanently in the Ottawa-Gatineau region. As new parents, my spouse and I were seeking a bit more stability for our family and an opportunity to reconnect with our respective families and friends in Canada. Furthermore, I was really looking for a job with a more domestic focus mandate, where I could put to good use my diplomatic and partnership management skills. When I saw the position at PCH advertised, I knew right away that it would be a good fit. *cont'd inside*



Construction on the memorial in December.

2. What interested you about working at PCH?

As Head of the Political Section at the Embassy of Canada in France, I had the opportunity to coordinate the visits of the Governor General and the Prime Minister to Northern France to mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 2017. In preparation for this major commemoration, I had the opportunity to visit the Canadian National Vimy Memorial on numerous occasions. Every visit to the Memorial left me with a lasting impression. In particular, the sight of bright white limestone wall, engraved with the name of every Canadian soldier who died during the First World War, only helped to reinforce my commitment to what the French call “devoir de mémoire” or the duty of remembrance. I also felt this strong feeling of pride and recognition of the sacrifice when I worked on the international commemorations for the 75th anniversary of D-Day at Juno Beach in June 2019. In my current capacity at PCH, my goal will be to put these personal experiences to good use and help to preserve and promote our history and Canadian values, especially with the younger generation.



Mr. Landry at Vimy Ridge.

3. What does your role at PCH mainly involve?

As Deputy Director General, Capital Interpretation and Commemorations, I am responsible for the national monument program, which oversees all current and new national monuments in Canada's capital. In addition to the Memorial to the Victims of Communism, my team is also working on other major projects, such as the National Monument to Canada's Mission in Afghanistan and LGBTQ2+ National

Monument. I am also responsible for the interpretation programs for the National Capital. As you know, Ottawa represents the seat of our government, but it is also a place of national heritage and history, as well as the cultural showcase of our nation. It is the mandate of my wonderful team to bring to life these national attractions, historic sites, symbols, stories and monuments to all Canadians.

4. What are the main challenges of getting a monument like Tribute to Liberty built, from the perspective of PCH?

Every major project has its own challenges. In the case of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism, the current pandemic caused unexpected delays which led to increased costs. With the additional resources announced in Budget 2021, Canadian Heritage, together with the National Capital Commission and Tribute to Liberty, will be able to finalize the steps required to determine a new project timeline and complete the monument once it is safe to do so. I am very hopeful that we will be able to announce some progress in the coming weeks.

5. How do you see the Tribute to Liberty monument contributing to fostering and promoting Canadian identity and values?

As you know, hundreds of thousands of Canadians first arrived here as refugees fleeing communist countries, risking everything to reach our borders in the hope of finding freedom and building a new future. These immigrant and refugee communities have since made important contributions to Canada's development and prosperity. I know that the Memorial will prompt visitors to reflect on the meaning of liberty and remind them that the core Canadian values that unite us must continue to be vigilantly protected. Once inaugurated, I am sure it will be an important landmark in the National Capital.

Tribute to Liberty Commemorates the 40th Anniversary of the Imposition of Martial Law in Poland

On a dark and frigid December 13th evening in Ottawa, numerous dignitaries and guests of the Canadian Polish Club (CPC) gathered at the Garden of the Provinces and Territories to participate in a candlelight vigil to commemorate the 40th anniversary

of the imposition of martial law in Poland.

Ludwik Klimkowski, Chair of Tribute to Liberty and President of the CPC in Ottawa, welcomed the guests and explained the significance of the event not only to the local Polish community but also to the thousands of Canadians affected by the events that occurred in Poland and the resistance that emerged from the imposition of martial law on a citizenry suffering under a communist regime.

Yvan Baker, MP for Etobicoke Centre, delivered remarks on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Prime Minister, while also drawing upon the experiences of his family's history with the effects of communism. A statement was then read by Tom Kmeic, MP for Calgary Shepard, representing Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Messages from representatives of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ottawa followed. The message was very clear....the suffering that occurred in Poland after the declaration of martial law on the order of the Military Council of National Salvation headed by General Wojciech Jaruzelski and introduced contrary to the constitution resulted in the internment of over 10,000 anti-communist opposition activists, and thousands of others placed under surveillance and intimidation. As many as 56 people lost their lives in the aftermath of the declaration.

Being fully aware of the vast social support for the "Solidarity" movement and the resulting threat to their position, the communists decided to use force and crackdown on the opposition. Solidarity was pushed underground, and its leaders arrested. The authorities had no qualms about shooting the people who resisted.



Prayers and lighting of the candles led by Scott McCaig, Bishop of the Military Ordinate of Canada. Robert Tmej, Tribute to Liberty board member, is on the left and Ludwik Klimkowski is on the right.

History Unhidden *Russia Crumbles*

The following is an excerpt from the memoir Refugee by Helen Rose Pauls.

My childhood now seems idyllic. Protected from any outside influences, our growing Mennonite village was in a prosperous region. We were a thriving farm family. Surrounded by a loving father and a mother who wanted only the best for her children, I was sheltered from the harsh realities of life around me.

Kronstal, my village of origin, is in the Chortitza colony which was the first of the Mennonite settlements in what is now Ukraine, but which was part of Russia at the time. On November 2, 1909, I became the first-born in a family that would soon include six children. My parents, George and Helen Sawatsky, possessed the land holdings of my maternal grandparents and enjoyed the good life on a huge fertile wheat farm.

Our homestead and village seemed opulent in comparison to the Russian villages we saw en route to the nearest city, Zaporozhye. The only association I had with the local people was with those who came to work my father's farm, some seasonally and some year round. In the house, mother employed several Russian girls to do the cleaning chores. They were grateful for jobs and I thought we treated them kindly.

The fact that I loved to work was a source of great embarrassment to my mother who longed to see me playing the great oak piano in the parlour rather than accompanying my father as he supervised the farm work. Whereas I was most delighted driving a coach and horses down the main street, my sister Anna impressed all the visitors with her ability at the piano. Although we were both given lessons, my interest soon dwindled, but my sister showed great talent. Little did I know that my physical strength and outdoorsy nature would save my life many times in the coming inferno.

Our homestead was formidable. The yard alone covered many acres including flower and vegetable gardens and over a hundred fruit trees, brought from a nursery far away and meticulously tended by

gardeners. Our home had a huge parlour which was the site of many Sunday afternoon visits when carriages arrived from our village and surrounding villages to have fasha (high tea) with us. My father was a favourite, being the church song leader and choir conductor, and his rich warm voice carried the melody during the song fests after the meal.

The wealth had come from my mother's side. Although my father had less material wealth to contribute to the family, he had an education and a keen intelligence. He had his millwright papers at an early age and seemed to win the respect of the Mennonite leaders when he was still a young man. This was no easy task as a young man had to "prove himself" in these small, close-knit communities.

The history of the Mennonite people in Russia goes back to 1789 when Catherine the Great invited our ancestors to come to Russia from Prussia, which is now north Poland but was then a part of Germany. She promised us free land, freedom of religion, freedom from the military, and our own education system. Being of Germanic origin herself, she invited many Catholic and Lutheran farmers from Germany as well, as she could appreciate their industry and efficient farming methods. In return for these freedoms, Empress Catherine hoped we would develop the rich, fertile, virgin soil of the Ukrainian steppes.

Mennonites were originally a Dutch pacifist religious community which began in the Netherlands during the Reformation in the 1500's, followers of Menno Simons. Disenfranchised by the Catholic state-church and suffering the death of 1,000 members by violent means, they moved east across Europe in search of religious freedom and economic opportunity. They settled in the Vistula delta in Prussia near the port of Gdansk (Danzig) on the Baltic Sea, at the invitation of the Kaiser who gave them the swamp lands. With their excellent knowledge of hydro technology, they soon transformed the delta into thriving farm communities. The Dutch language gave way to German, the language of Prussia.

However, their pacifist ideals gained negative attention and by the end of the 1700's it was becoming very difficult to expand their lands. Many Mennonites welcomed Catherine the Great's invitation to come to Russia.

After some initial hardships, the Mennonite people became very prosperous on the Ukrainian steppes, in sharp contrast to the peasants in the area who had not been given the same advantages. Our thrift, hard work, and sense of order—reinforced by the community and the church—resulted in plentiful harvests and subsequent wealth. By the beginning of the twentieth century, 410 Mennonite villages dotted the southern steppes. They were virtually islands, like pearls on a string, in a vast, enigmatic land on the verge of great social and political upheaval. I remember my father's wise ways with us children. "Natasha," he would say to me when he saw me looking in the mirror (I had many admirers in those days). "Natasha, look at your heart first, not at your face." He often encouraged us to memorize scripture. "Someday you may not have the Bible to read," he said. We could not conceive of such a day in our wildest imaginings, or the dreadful circumstances leading up to it. Mother seemed distant and strict, but my father was always warm, always loving. Being the eldest of four girls and two boys, I was his right hand on the farm. We made many decisions together and supervised our hired help as we rode through the fields.

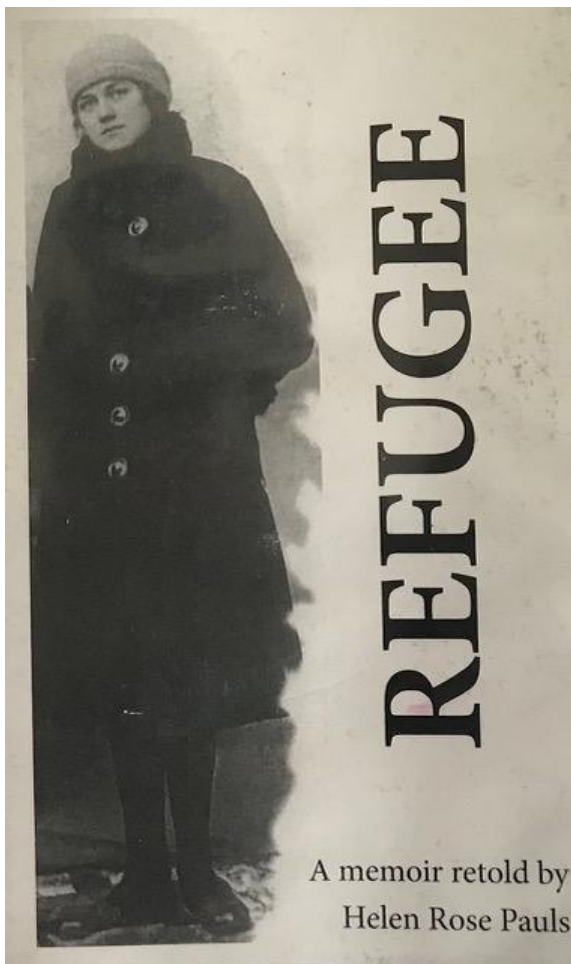


The Sawatsky family.

Little reached our village to disturb us from our gentle life. My sisters would play with their dolls (with eyes that opened and closed; they had come all the way from Moscow), and dream of a happy future, pursuing much the same lifestyle our parents had. The mass media which now brings news into our homes from around the world, was of course, not a part of our lives. We children and many adults as well, didn't realize that outside of our closed communities, great upheavals were raging. Massive discontent was fermenting among the Russian people. Crop failures and depression began in the late 1890's and the

peasants were starving. Student protests, peasant revolts and worker strikes increased.

In 1903, Lenin headed the Bolsheviks who followed the Socialist teachings of Marx. They were dedicated to giving power to the working class. A revolution was attempted in 1905, but was suppressed by the Czar's troops. Many conflicts followed. Unrest grew further when war broke out with Japan in 1908. During World War One, Russia was completely unable to meet the needs of her people, causing great anxiety and hardship among townspeople and soldiers as well as the peasants. In 1917, the Bolsheviks overthrew the government and seized power. Czar Nicholas, Czarina Alexandria, and their children were ultimately murdered.



Civil War commenced between the Reds (communists) and Whites (anti-communists) and continued until 1920, when the Reds were victorious. It was a bad time for wealthy anti-communist land owners. It was especially bad for foreigners and German speakers because World War One had been against Germany.

We were still considered both foreigners and Germans because our people had retained their own strong culture and had not mixed with the Russians, except for business dealings. After 125 years in Russia, we still thought of Russian as our second language, as we had our own schools and churches where only German was spoken.

Now fear began to stalk our colonies. The jails had been opened after the Revolution and roving hordes of bandits pillaged and murdered at will all over south Russia and in many Mennonite settlements. Before the new government could put an end to this anarchy, over a thousand of our people had suffered gruesome murders. By the end of 1920, war, anarchy, famine, and disease epidemics had, by some estimates, caused the deaths of twenty million Russian citizens.

When rumblings of the Revolution came to our village in the form of armed hooligans, I remember Mother hiding in the straw pile while they took food and whatever struck their fancy from the house. However, we were spared the rape, arson, and murder which took place elsewhere.

Many neighbouring Mennonite villages suffered indescribable horrors during this period, so in the early 1920's, many Mennonite landowners sold all they had and left for Canada. My parents had suffered no great personal losses so they saw no need to leave, thinking the worst was over. Ironically, our paternal grandparents begged my parents to relocate to Canada with them before it was too late.

Father would have been willing, but Mother could not leave the lovely farm she had been raised on and felt sure that our peaceful lifestyle would soon return. She refused to go. If they had foreseen the next decade, they would have fled Russia with only the clothes on their backs.

As it was, they bid Father's parents tearful good-byes and remained behind. Father's parents died peacefully in Saskatchewan of old age after farming there for many years. My father and mother died sooner. They perished in Siberia in the 1930's and were buried in a mass grave. Cause of death: starvation.

Refugee is available from Helen Rose Pauls who can be reached at: ehpauls@shaw.ca