



Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Ceremony

"Spirit of the Republic" Statue Unveiling

Saturday, February 12, 2000

Confederation Garden Park
Victoria, British Columbia

1.3.049 (fs. 4)

"Spirit of the Republic"



THE CHALLENGE for the BC Monument Committee was to create a symbolic and historic monument to honour the courage and valour of British Columbian and other Canadian volunteers who fought in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39).

Of the 1600 Canadian volunteers, some 600 members of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion wear the Spanish earth as their shroud. The memory of these valiant men and women is the inextricable link between the people of Spain who chose an elected form of government and the volunteers who went to Spain to defend that choice.

Phase 1 of the monument was unveiled on December 4, 1998. The basalt pillars were chosen because of their similarity to rock formations in the Ebro Sector in Spain. The pillars were quarried near Squamish, BC, and generously donated by the quarry owner, Mr. Doug MacDonald. They symbolize the rough ground of the battlefields of Spain and the lack of cover encountered by the ill-equipped Canadian volunteers. Three of the pillars are arranged in a "V" shape to symbolize the eventual victory of the Spanish Republic, after 45 years of dictatorship, upon the death of General Franco in 1975. These three columns each have a bronze medallion affixed to them: the emblem of the Veterans of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, the dogwood blossom commemorating the British Columbian volunteers, and the emblem of the International Brigades whose volunteers came from 53 different countries.

The bronze plaque gives a brief history of events that overtook the Second Republic of Spain in 1936 when the elected popular front Republican Government was confronted by the fascist uprising lead

by Franco and his generals, generously supplied with arms, aircraft, materiel and troops by Hitler and Mussolini. It has been said if the elected Republican Government of Spain had prevailed against the insurgent forces of General Franco, there might never have been a Second World War (1939-1945).

Internationally renowned sculptor, Jack Harman, has created the magnificent bronze "Spirit of the Republic". His inspiration came from a Spanish allegorical portrait, dated April 14, 1931, and from a series of poster illustrations created during the Spanish Civil War depicting the defence of the Republic and the ideals of a democratically elected government.

The sculpture is identifiably Spanish with its Basque cap and crown (representing Spain's regions and architecture), the rope sandals (alpargatas) on her feet, and the laurel wreath of the Spanish Republic held in her hand. This lovely figure portrays the strength, dignity, determination and beauty of a people who aspired to establish a democratic government. Jack Harman has captured in her face the sadness of this slow victory at such a high cost. The dove of peace in her left hand is representative and characteristic of all nationalities and people who desire peace and democratic governments.

Jack Harman created a figure that reflects the 1930's, reminding us of what might have been had the Spanish Republican Government been able to obtain arms to defend itself against the fascist coup d'etat that became the Spanish Civil War. May this monument to the courage and valour of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) keep alive in our hearts the idea that democracy is worth defending.

Acknowledgements

The BC Monument Committee would like to thank the following for their assistance in the creation of this monument to honour forgotten British Columbian and Canadian heroes who served with the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) in the defence of the elected Republican Government of Spain.

All those who made financial contributions, large and small, and gave in kind in order that this long overdue recognition became a reality

The Honourable Dan Miller, Premier of British Columbia, and staff

The Honourable Andrew Petter, and staff

Former Premier Glen Clark, and staff

Officers and staff of the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union

Canadian Labour Congress

British Columbia Federation of Labour and affiliates

National Union of Public and General Employees

British Columbia and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council

Trev Deeley Motorcycles

BC Coalition of Motorcyclists

Julius Fisher, Working TV

Special thanks to:

Association of Veterans and Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (Canada)

Jack Harman, O.B.C., R.C.A., Sculptor, "The Spirit of the Republic" and family

Sean R. McEwen, Project Architect, Monument Garden design, placement and installation.

Concept for the sculpture after poster artwork by Parilla and Oliver (1937-38)

Doug MacDonald, Whistler, BC, basalt stone quarried and donated to the Monument Project

British Columbia Buildings Corporation, Monument site work, preparation and installation

Staff of the Government of British Columbia who assisted in this project



The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Monument



"Spirit of the Republic"

by Jack Harman, O.B.C., R.C.A.

Saturday, February 12, 2000

Legislative Precinct
Victoria, British Columbia

PROGRAM

- 12:40 pm Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Veterans, family members and visiting veterans of the Spanish Civil War gather in the Lower Rotunda of the Parliament Buildings
- 12:45 pm Premier Dan Miller arrives in the Lower Rotunda and meets the group
- 12:55 pm Led by Piper Byron Barnard playing "Meeting of the Waters/ Scotland the Brave", everyone proceeds out of the Parliament Buildings to Confederation Garden Park
- 1:00 pm Welcome by Joe Barrett and Tom Kozar
Address by Premier Dan Miller
Address by Joaquin Ayala, Honorary Consul of Spain
Address by Jack Harman, OBC, RCA, Sculptor
Address by Svend Robinson, MP
Address by George Heyman, President, BC Government Employees Union
Address by Jim Sinclair, President, BC Federation of Labour
Address by Bob Reid, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion volunteer from the United States of America
Address by Rosaleen Ross on behalf of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion volunteers
Byron Barnard plays "The Skye Boat Song" as the "Spirit of the Republic" statue is unveiled by Premier Miller and Mackenzie-Papineau Veterans
- 1:45 pm Led by Piper Byron Barnard playing "McNeil of Ugadale/ Bonnie Dundee", the group proceeds to the Parliament Buildings for a Reception, where Sharon Hazelwood, Art Farquharson and O'Dean perform

RED MOON

And the same pallid moon tonight,
Which rides so quietly, clear and high,
The mirror of our pale and troubled gaze
Raised to a cool Canadian sky.

Above the shattered Spanish tops
Last night rose low and wild and red,
Reflecting back from her illumined shield
The blond bespattered faces of the dead.

To that pale disc we raise our clenched fists,
And to those nameless dead our vows renew,
"Comrades, who fought for freedom and the future world,
Who died for us, we will remember you."

Norman Bethune (1936)