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a Happy Easter!

**Христос  
Воскрес!**



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**Konowal to be honoured in France**

By Kent Spencer,  
Pastweb.ca Network

Victoria Cross winner Filip Konowal, who served with a New Westminster-based battalion during the First World War, will be honoured with a commemorative walk next month in Northern France, at a spot a few hundred metres from his most famous encounter.

Konowal, of the 47th Battalion, is the only Ukrainian-Canadian to be honoured with that supreme military distinction for valor.

"It's really not



Sgt. Robert Harley pictured with memorabilia from Cpl. Filip Konowal of the 47th Battalion who won a Victoria Cross during WWI. (Lionelle Schneider/Pastweb.ca Network)

important thing we could have done to recall his memory," said Lubomyr Luciuk, a Canadian academic who spearheaded the Konowal walk fundraiser for the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

Konowal's story is one of the most unusual in Canadian military annals. Born in Ukraine, he was a bayonet instructor in the Tsarist Russian army before immigrating to Vancouver in 1913. He joined up in Ontario in 1915 and once he arrived in France was transferred to what is now called the Royal Westminster Regiment.

Attaining the rank of corporal, Konowal was credited with killing 16 German soldiers, mostly with his bayonet, in house-to-house fighting in the city of Lens in August, 1917, close to a place called Hill 70. A few days later he was shot in the head by a sniper, which led to lifelong health problems, said Luciuk.

Invalidated out of action, in 1919 Konowal stabbed a man to death while defending a friend in Hull, Quebec. He was found "not guilty by reason of insanity" and confined to a mental asylum for seven years.

Upon his release, Konowal eventually found work as a janitor in the

House of Commons, where he was spotted by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King wearing a small replica of his Victoria Cross. King hired Konowal into his own office as a special custodian and he was able to turn his life around.

Konowal was buried with full military honours in Ottawa's Notre Dame cemetery in 1959.

Luciuk said a ceremony to open Konowal's walk will be held on April 8 near Lens. The walk is part of a larger \$12 million memorial at Hill 70, which has been built to call attention to the often-overlooked battle.

Hill 70 was attacked by all four Canadian divisions after Canadian Corps commander General Sir Arthur Currie convinced his British overlords that it was a safer and shorter bet than directly attacking the heavily fortified city of Lens. His logic was that Hill 70 overlooked Lens and so once secured could be used to lay down accurate artillery fire. The ten-day battle began on Aug. 15 — four months after the Battle of Vimy Ridge — and was a success. Six VC's were awarded to Canadian soldiers at Hill 70, two more than were given at Vimy Ridge.

Hill 70 committee chair Mark Hutchings, a retired colonel, said it was the first time the Canadian Corps had been commanded by a Canadian general and that Currie was his own man, planning and executing the assault according to his own counsel.

"A beautiful set-piece victory was won. Politics changed after Hill 70. Canada had its own seat at the peace talks," Hutchings said, noting the link between military power and political status.

Committee member Rob Baxter added Currie was a long-time resident of Victoria who rose from the rank of corporal in 1900 to commander of the Canadian Corps.

"He could take a piece of topography and read the land like a poem reader," Baxter said. "He would argue with the British senior staff. You didn't do that. You got sent home."

The group's memorial includes a 17-metre high obelisk made from white limestone, a Maple Leaf measuring 20 metres across, 18 interpretive panels and six walkways for the medal winners. Eight hectares of land have been donated by the French government.

For more information on Konowal, read Luciuk's book, "1918: A Canadian Hero, Corporal Filip Konowal, VC and the Battle of Hill 70" (Kingston: Kashitas Press, 2017).

The not-profit committee's website is at hill70.ca.

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