

by Maria Dunn

## Shadow of the Rockies<sup>1</sup>

Living in Alberta for 25 years, I have travelled in and through the stunning Canadian Rockies countless times. Only recently did I learn that some of the infrastructure that helps us enjoy the mountain parks was built by the forced labour of Ukrainian Canadian men interned during WWI. A few years earlier, Canada had actively encouraged these immigrants (often referred to as “Galicians”) as much-needed industrial workers, particularly in railway construction. However, in the face of war with the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1914, the government decided that these “enemy aliens”, now unemployed by the pre-war recession, were a potential menace to the community and should be detained in remote camps. Food, clothing and living conditions were poor, and on top of their expected work time, the internees often had to march many hours from the camp to their place of work.

This song takes its name from a book written by B.S. Kordan & P. Melnycky entitled *In the Shadow of the Rockies: Diary of the Castle Mountain Internment Camp, 1915-1917*.

OTHER READING: Waiser, B. *Park prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946*. Calgary: Fifth House, 1995.

Young stranger,  
as you walk these trails of beauty  
And you feel the mountain air caress your face  
As you stand in the shadow of the Rockies  
Remember who toiled in this place  
Please, remember who toiled in this place

I.  
They courted our labour and called us to settle  
The Great Canadian Plains  
But how fickle the love of a fair young Alberta  
For her “enemy aliens”

II.  
Oh pity the young man in 1914  
Who hadn't a job or a trade  
And doubly so the man from Galicia<sup>2</sup>  
For he was soon detained

III.  
Our invisible hands worked in nature's cathedral  
For the pleasure of tourist and town  
Six days a week at slavery's wages  
Still we were not wanted around

IV.  
In a camp the lay beneath Castle Mountain  
Rotten food and sodden tents  
The most glorious place in the world is ugly  
When seen through a barbed wire fence

V.  
Our footsteps and voices have long since faded  
From these pristine forest paths  
Yet many's the mile and the hour we trudged here  
To our place of labour and back

VII.  
If you listen, young stranger, the wind in the pines  
Or the water over the stones  
You may hear the songs we sang to each other  
To remind us of our homes

### NOTES:

1. The title of the song is taken from the title of the following book:  
Kordan, B.S. & Melnycky, P. *In the Shadow of the Rockies: Diary of the Castle Mountain Internment Camp, 1915-1917*. Edmonton: University of Alberta: Canadian Institute of the Canadian Studies Press, 1991.

2. Galicia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time of WWI. Ukrainians were often referred to as “Galicians” in the early 1900s in Canada.

Sources used for *In the Shadow of the Rockies*:

*In the Shadow of the Rockies: Diary of the Castle Mountain Internment Camp, 1915-1917*.

Waiser, B. *Park prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946*. Calgary: Fifth House, 1995.

Doskoch, W.H. *Oral history interview by Alberta Labour History Institute*. Unpublished, 2001.

Doskoch, W.H. *Strait from the Heart: Biography of W (Bill) Doskoch, 1893 – 1941*. Self-published, 1993.

- description of his father's (Bill's) experiences in internment camps in BC and Ontario, 1915-19.

Gmin F

Chorus: Young stran - ger as you walk these trails of  
 beau - ty and you feel the mountain air ca -  
 ress your face as you  
 play in the shad - ow of the Rock - ies re -  
 member who toiled in this place Please, re -  
 member who toiled in this place Verse: They  
 1. court - ed our lab - our man and called us to  
 2. pit - y the young man in nine - teen and  
 set - tie the who great Can -  
 four - teen hadn't a  
 a - di - an plains but how  
 job or a trade and  
 fickl - the love of a fair young Al -  
 doubl - y so the man from Ga -  
 bert - a for her en - e - my  
 li - cia for for he was  
 a - li - ens oh  
 soon de - tained chorus: (Young)