

## Doukhobors in the First World War Canadian Expeditionary Forces, 1914-1919<sup>1</sup>

Surname	Name	Address	Date of Birth	Occupation	Enlisted	Prev. Service	Regiment	Unit	Rank	Discharged	Reason	Medal	Personnel Record
<b>Antifaev</b>	Alex	Arran, SK	1873	Blacksmith	10/01/16	3 yrs Russia	888036	144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	10/07/16	Medically Unfit	-	<a href="#">Box 198-6</a>
<b>Astoforoff</b>	John	Buchanan, SK	06/1890	Carpenter	03/06/16	No	888082	188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	05/16/16	Discharge by Purchase	-	<a href="#">Box 278-12</a>
<b>Barabanoff</b>	Anton T.	Petrofka, SK	06/1889	Farmer	10/05/16	No	887957	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	11/25/16	Being an "Alien"	-	<a href="#">Box 415-54</a>
<b>Bedinoff</b>	Fred	Kamsack, SK	04/1892	Farmer	22/02/16	No	888055	144 <sup>th</sup> , 200 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	10/17/16	Medically Unfit	-	<a href="#">Box 583-55</a>
<b>Bolanoff</b>	Sam	Winnipeg, MB	03/15/1895	Labourer	08/06/18	No	3348466	13 <sup>th</sup> Man Reg	Pte	12/09/18	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 854-48</a>
<b>Danshin</b>	George	Canora, SK	25/03/1886	Farmer	04/03/16	3 yrs Russia	267269	214 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	10/21/16	Desertion	-	<a href="#">Box 2291-7</a>
<b>Degarvoosoff</b>	Nick M.	Canora, SK	12/14/1897	Labourer	03/18/16	No	888038	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	04/04/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 2409-12</a>
<b>Derhousoff</b>	Nick M.	Canora, SK	14/12/1897	Labourer	18/03/16	No	888094	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	04/04/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 2455-44</a>
<b>Diakoff</b>	Coozma	Kamsack, SK	01/01/1877	Farmer	27/12/15	No	888030	3 <sup>rd</sup> C Lab Bat	Pte	07/25/18	Discharged	-	<a href="#">Box 2500-43</a>
<b>Dootoff</b>	Mike	Veregin, SK	25/03/1897	Farmer	10/04/16	No	267756	214 <sup>th</sup> Bat, 15 <sup>th</sup> Rs	Pte	09/04/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 2601-59</a>
<b>Gloeboff</b>	William J.	Kamsack, SK	10/03/1896	Farmer	16/07/17	No	2147550	8 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Trooper	09/01/18	Killed in Action	-	<a href="#">Box 3588-47</a>
<b>Gaulieff</b>	Phillip	Petrofka, SK	12/11/1881	Farmer	28/04/16	No	294322	223 <sup>rd</sup> Bat	Pte	11/18/16	No Naturalization	-	<a href="#">Box 3445-21</a>
<b>Gretchin</b>	Peter	Kamsack, SK	1898	Labourer	17/02/16	No	888056	188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	01/26/17	Desertion	-	<a href="#">Box 3819-43</a>
<b>Gritchin</b>	Peter	Kamsack, SK	1898	Labourer	17/02/16	No	888056	188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	01/26/17	Desertion	-	<a href="#">Box 3852-17</a>
<b>Helebeff</b>	Michael	-	-	-	05/16/18	-	260991	1 <sup>st</sup> Sask Reg	Pte	05/22/18	Conscripted in Error	-	<a href="#">Box 4236-27</a>
<b>Holoboff</b>	James J.	Canora, SK	01/11/1895	Farmer	17/12/15	No	887366	188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	04/20/19	Demobilized	Military Medal	<a href="#">Box 4466-27</a>

<sup>1</sup> Originally compiled 03/02/05 by Jonathan J. Kalmakoff from Library and Archives Canada, Record Group 150, Accession Group 1992-93/166, Box (see above entries). Updated 13/11/17; 11/11/25.

Surname	Name	Address	Date of Birth	Occupation	Enlisted	Prev. Service	Regiment	Unit	Rank	Discharged	Reason	Medal	Personnel Record
<b>Holoboff</b>	Michael F.	Canora, SK	08/12/1895	Farmer	05/18/18	No	260990	1 <sup>st</sup> Depot Bat	Pte	05/22/18	Conscripted in Error -		<a href="#">Box 4466–28</a>
<b>Holodilin</b>	Fred	Kamsack, SK	06/29/1887	Farmer	12/25/16	No	888032	188 <sup>th</sup> , 52 <sup>nd</sup> Bat	Pte	04/04/19	Demobilized		<a href="#">Box 4466 – 30</a>
<b>Holokoff</b>	John P.	Veregin, SK	10/01/1898	Labourer	13/03/16	No	888078	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	08/15/16	Alien Enemy -		<a href="#">Box 4466–36</a>
<b>Horkoff</b>	Steven J.	Devils Lake, SK	05/08/1891	Farmer	02/08/15	No	104286	10 <sup>th</sup> , 68 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	01/14/19	Demobilized -		<a href="#">Box 4497–64</a>
<b>Isavoloff</b>	Fred	Buchanan, SK	24/05/1890	Farmer	13/03/16	No	267371	214 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	10/25/16	Medically Unfit -		<a href="#">Box 4724–64</a>
<b>Katilnikoff</b>	William J.	Blaine Lake, SK	07/25/1897	Farmer	05/21/18	No	268722	1 <sup>st</sup> Sask Reg	Pte	06/01/18	Desertion -		<a href="#">Box 5005–47</a>
<b>Karaloff</b>	John	Camberly, SK	26/05/1893	Farmer	26/02/16	No	904284	194 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	02/04/19	Demobilized -		<a href="#">Box 5002–26</a>
<b>Karaloff</b>	Samuel S.	Blaine Lake, SK	18/05/1897	Barber	25/05/16	No	1018444	232 <sup>nd</sup> Bat	Pte	02/14/16	Illegally Absent -		<a href="#">Box 5002–27</a>
<b>Kazakoff</b>	Nick	Kamsack, SK	24/04/1888	Mechanic/Eng'r	11/01/16	No	888039	188 <sup>th</sup> , 249 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	03/19/19	Demobilized -		<a href="#">Box 5012–23</a>
<b>Kolesnikoff</b>	Demitri	Thrums, BC	1881	Farmer	11/11/17	No	4100943	1 <sup>st</sup> Alta Reg	Pte	03/28/19	Conscripted in Error -		<a href="#">Box 5246–40</a>
<b>Kolesnikov</b>	John	Kamsack, SK	1886	Farmer	13/03/16	Russo-Japan War	888079	188 <sup>th</sup> , 52 <sup>nd</sup> Bat	Pte	02/25/19	Demobilized -		<a href="#">Box 5246–43</a>
<b>Kolesnikov</b>	Samuel	Kamsack, SK	22/01/1885	Labourer	13/03/16	Russo-Japan War	888080	144 <sup>th</sup> , 190 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	12/02/16	Medically Unfit -		<a href="#">Box 5246–44</a>
<b>Konkin</b>	Mike	Kamsack, SK	1898	Clerk	18/11/16	No	913763	197 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	11/30/16	Minor -		<a href="#">Box 5247–58</a>
<b>Konkin</b>	Peter S.	Petrofka, SK	22/06/1884	Farmer	10/06/16	No	913536	197 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	09/07/16	Desertion -		<a href="#">Box 5247–59</a>
<b>Lakten</b>	Alex	Veregin, SK	1891	Farmer	21/02/16	No	888059	10 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	10/14/18	Medically Unfit -		<a href="#">Box 5322–18</a>
<b>Loveroff aka Postnikoff</b>	Frederick N.	Toronto, ON	08/06/1895	Art Student	11/06/14	No	349786	RCHA	Gnnr	10/09/17	Conscientious Objector -		<a href="#">Box 5761–15</a>
<b>Mahartoff</b>	Kussia	Benito, MA	02/04/1880	Farmer	08/01/16	No	1000344	43 <sup>rd</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> , 226 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	07/02/19	Demobilized -		<a href="#">Box 5843–29</a>
<b>Maloff</b>	John	Kamsack, SK	1888	Labourer	27/03/16	No	888523	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	10/18/16	Medically Unfit -		<a href="#">Box 5876–40</a>

Surname	Name	Address	Date of Birth	Occupation	Enlisted	Prev Service	Regiment	Unit	Rank	Discharged	Reason	Medal	Personnel Record
<b>Markin</b>	Andrew	Kamsack, SK	10/11/1896	Labourer	27/03/16	No	888088	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	07/15/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 5926-10</a>
<b>Markin</b>	William	Winnipeg, MA	08/06/1896	Chauffeur	07/12/16	No	1072141	249 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	02/19/19	Medically Unfit	-	<a href="#">Box 5926-12</a>
<b>Namonchen</b> aka <b>Nemanikin</b>	John M.	Langham, SK	1893	Farmer	15/06/16	No	255863	210 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	02/08/17	Illegally Absent	-	<a href="#">Box 7231-54</a>
<b>Nevacshonoff</b>	John	Thrums, BC	06/01/1895	Farmer	24/06/16	No	1018518	232 <sup>nd</sup> , 28 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	04/06/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 7279-3</a>
<b>Ostoforoff</b>	George	Buchanan, SK	12/07/1885	Labourer	18/09/18	No	3091494	1 <sup>st</sup> Quebec Reg	Pte	12/06/18	Medically Unfit	-	<a href="#">Box 7502-55</a>
<b>Popoff</b>	Bill	Kamsack, SK	20/01/1897	Farmer	23/05/16	No	888090	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	09/13/16	Desertion	-	<a href="#">Box 7903-48</a>
<b>Popoff</b>	Fred	Kamsack, SK	1893	Labourer	18/12/16	No	888019	144 <sup>th</sup> , 188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	05/30/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 7903-49</a>
<b>Posnikoff</b>	James S.	Arran, SK	1894	Farmer	11/12/15	No	887358	188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	10/03/16	Desertion	-	<a href="#">Box 7918-4</a>
<b>Posnikoff</b>	James S.	Arran, SK	1894	Farmer	04/11/16	No	1084059	251 <sup>st</sup> Bat	Pte	01/22/17	No Naturalization	-	<a href="#">Box 7918-5</a>
<b>Posnikoff</b>	William W.	Canora, SK	30/09/1896	Engineer	21/11/16	No	1084247	251 <sup>st</sup> Bat	Pte	01/02/17	No Naturalization	-	<a href="#">Box 7918-6</a>
<b>Postnekoff</b>	Simeon	Blaine Lake, SK	19/02/1871	Farmer	01/06/16	No	1018450	232 <sup>nd</sup> Bat	Pte	12/31/16	Medically Unfit	-	<a href="#">Box 7919-54</a>
<b>Postnikoff</b>	John	Petrofka, SK	12/01/1884	Farmer	12/22/14	No	1288989	9 <sup>th</sup> Reg Can. Mt. Rf. Pte		03/15/15	Inefficiency	-	<a href="#">Box 7919-55</a>
<b>Postnupoff</b>	John	Petrofka, SK	12/01/1884	Farmer	12/22/14	No	1289025	9 <sup>th</sup> Reg Can. Mt. Rf Pte		03/15/15	Inefficiency	-	<a href="#">Box 7919-56</a>
<b>Potatoff</b>	Mike	Whitebeech, SK	1888	Farmer	31/05/16	No	922526	200 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	11/29/16	Being an "Alien"	-	<a href="#">Box 7920-9</a>
<b>Reiben</b>	Larion	Benito, MA	1893	Labourer	18/12/15	No	888020	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	03/23/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 8151-30</a>
<b>Reibin</b>	Nicoli	Benito, MA	01/06/1891	Farmer	29/12/15	No	888033	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	03/19/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 8151-33</a>
<b>Sherstabetaff</b>	Fred	Blaine Lake, SK	01/05/1895	Farmer	02/07/16	No	1018617	232 <sup>nd</sup> Bat	Pte	12/03/20	Misconduct	-	<a href="#">Box 8860-39</a>
<b>Storshoff</b>	Henry	Kamsack, SK	1896	Labourer	18/02/16	No	888062	188 <sup>th</sup> , 46 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	03/28/19	Demobilized	St George Cross	<a href="#">Box 9365-5</a>

Surname	Name	Address	Date of Birth	Occupation	Enlistment	Prev Service	Regiment	Unit	Rank	Discharged	Reason	Medal	Personnel Record
<b>Storshoff</b>	Walter	Kamsack, SK	1896	Farm Labourer	10/01/16	No	888048	188 <sup>th</sup> , 46 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	03/28/17	Killed in Action	-	<a href="#">Box 9365-6</a>
<b>Strelioff</b>	Peter	Canora, SK	31/05/1900	Farmers Help	02/10/16	No	887433	188 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	04/09/19	Being a Minor	-	<a href="#">Box 9381-45</a>
<b>Stretoolekoff</b> aka <b>Strelioff</b>	William	Kamsack, SK	1898	Labourer	23/03/16	No	888089	188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	08/16/16	Alien Enemy	-	<a href="#">Box 9382-7</a>
<b>Sturnoshoff</b> aka <b>Stushnov</b>	Bill W.	Kamsack, SK	05/1898	Labourer	01/06/16	No	888526	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	06/03/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 9404-48</a>
<b>Velasoff</b>	George	Kamsack, SK	-	-	03/18/16	No	888093	188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	01/26/17	Desertion	-	<a href="#">Box 9925-52</a>
<b>Voikin</b>	Nick P.	Petrofka, SK	14/12/1898	Farmer	25/03/16	No	886517	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	01/11/16	Medically Unfit	-	<a href="#">Box 9965-32</a>
<b>Voikin</b>	Nicoli J.	Arran, SK	09/11/1894	Farmer	21/01/16	No	888046	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	03/24/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 9965-33</a>
<b>Wlosove</b>	George	Kamsack, SK	01/04/1894	Farmer	18/03/16	No	888093	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	01/26/17	Desertion	-	<a href="#">Box 10516-17</a>
<b>Wlosove</b>	George N.	Runnymede, SK	21/02/1898	Labourer	07/06/16	No	888520	188 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	08/15/17	Alien Enemy	-	<a href="#">Box 10516-18</a>
<b>Yachenkoff</b>	Nick N.	Veregin, SK	04/09/1897	Farmer	09/03/16	No	267332	214 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	07/04/17	Irregularly Enlisted	-	<a href="#">Box 10625-32</a>
<b>Yaretza</b> aka <b>Youritsin</b>	Nicoli	Arran, SK	10/03/1886	Labourer	09/02/16	No	888063	188 <sup>th</sup> , 144 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	09/29/16	Medically Unfit	-	<a href="#">Box 10627-42</a>
<b>Zmaeff</b>	John F.	Swan River, MA	07/02/1896	Farmer	07/02/16	No	1000659	226 <sup>th</sup> Bat	Pte	05/19/19	Demobilized	-	<a href="#">Box 10681-61</a>

## Explanatory Note

During the First World War, the overwhelming majority of Doukhobors in Canada opposed the conflict based on their religious pacifist principles and sought exemption from military service under Order-in-Council P.C. 2747 of December 6, 1898, granted to them by the Dominion Government of Canada upon their arrival from Russia. Over the course of the war (1914-1919), petitions and delegations sent to Ottawa on behalf of the two main Doukhobor organizations of the time, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (est. 7,000 members) and the Society of Independent Doukhobors of Canada (est. 5,000 members), were met with repeated assurances from Dominion authorities that their exemption status as conscientious objectors would continue to be honoured.

Notwithstanding these efforts at the group level, a number of individual Doukhobors still participated in the conflict. Of the approximately 2,500 Doukhobor men of service age (out of a then-population of 12,000 Doukhobors) in Canada, 58 men (2%) either voluntarily enlisted or were forcibly conscripted into the Canadian Expeditionary Forces (“CEF”) between 1914 and 1919. According to the March 3, 1916 edition of the *Ottawa Journal*, the number of Doukhobor enlistees was even higher, with allegedly “ninety Doukhobors of the Yorkton district having enlisted in the Eastern Saskatchewan regiment”; however, this claim is not substantiated by the attestation records.

### ***Reasons for Participating***

Why did this relatively small group of Doukhobors participate in the ‘Great War’? If we are to believe the *Ottawa Journal*, “these Doukhobors came to this country from Russia to escape, among other things, military service. They state that this is a war for liberty, and they feel it is their duty to assist in the battle for it.” When we examine their military personnel records, however, it becomes apparent that their motivations were much more nuanced, varied and complex.

Fifty-six of the Doukhobor men voluntarily enlisted in the CEF between August 4, 1914 and August 28, 1917. All listed Saskatchewan or Manitoba home addresses in their attestation records, and all were ostensibly Independent Doukhobors. However, at least six men listed their parents living in communal settlements in British Columbia as their next-of-kin, which would suggest that they themselves had only recently defected from the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood prior to enlisting. Generally, with respect to Independent Doukhobors, it can be said that they were more integrated into Canadian society than their communal brethren, having accepted naturalization, public education, private ownership and other tenets of citizenship; this may have fostered a stronger attachment to, and sympathy towards, their adopted country that enabled some to overcome their religious objections to military service and participate in the war effort.

- Some were undoubtedly swept up in the wave of nationwide patriotic fervor that Canada experienced at the outbreak of the war, with thousands of men eagerly rushing to enlist for King and Country. This enthusiasm, rooted in strong emotional ties to their country and outrage over German aggression, was reinforced and sustained through large flag-waving crowds, and extensive public campaigns and propaganda.
- Others may have succumbed to the considerable social and peer pressure to enlist that replaced the early enthusiasm. This pressure intensified as voluntary recruitment declined in the face of heavy casualties and a long, costly war, eventually leading to the highly divisive conscription crisis of 1917. What is more, Doukhobors and other conscientious objectors faced ridicule and backlash for their pacifist beliefs in the Canadian popular press and were publicly denounced as ‘shirkers’, ‘cowards’, ‘conchies’, ‘slackers’, ‘parasites’, ‘traitors’ or simply ‘unpatriotic’.
- Still others may have enlisted for purely economic reasons. Unemployment was exceptionally high in Western Canada during the recession that preceded the war, and the outbreak of the war initially worsened the situation. In this regard, almost half of the Doukhobor enlistees – 27 men in total – belonged to the proletariat of landless farm workers and laborers, and many of these young men may have enlisted out of desperation.
- Finally, over a third of the Doukhobor enlistees – 22 men in total – were members of the ‘Small’ and ‘Middle’ parties of Doukhobors who had only recently arrived in Canada in 1909-1914, and whose pacifist convictions were weak compared to their brethren of the ‘Large’ party who arrived earlier in 1899. Several of these ‘latecomers’ to Canada had even previously served in the Imperial Russian Army, including Alex Antifaev of Arran, SK, George Danshin of Canora, SK, and John Kolesnikov and Samuel Kolesnikov of Kamsack, SK.

Interestingly, two of the Doukhobor men – Michael Holoboff of Canora, Saskatchewan and Demitri Kolesnikoff of Thrums, BC – were forcibly conscripted into the CEF following the enactment of *The Military Service Act* by the Dominion of Canada on August 28, 1917. For whatever reason, these men were unable to rely on the exemption from military service granted to their brethren, or government authorities were unwilling to apply it towards them, even though both listed their religion as “Doukhobor” on their attestation forms. Both were subsequently discharged for being “erroneously ordered to report”; although in the case of Kolesnikoff, the discharge process took nearly a year and a half.

### ***Guilt and Remorse***

Whatever their reasons for participating in the conflict, it would appear that many of the Doukhobor servicemen experienced guilt, regret and remorse for having abandoned their pacifist principles. Evidence of this can be found in their military personnel files as follows:

- Three Doukhobor enlistees – William Strelieff and Bill Stushnoff of Kamsack, SK, Nick Derhouseoff of Canora, SK, and John Postnikoff of Petrofka, SK - misspelled or deliberately distorted their names in their attestation papers as “Stretoolekoff”, “Sturnoshoff”, “Dergavoosoff”, and “Postnupoff”, respectively. This was presumably done to spare themselves and their families embarrassment and unwanted attention. Similarly, Frederick Postnikoff of Blaine Lake enlisted under the alias “Loveroff”, a family nickname or street name.
- Many attempted to distance themselves from their Doukhobor religious identity in their attestation papers. For example, seven identified their religious affiliation as “Greek Catholic”, six as “Lutheran”, three as “Roman Catholic”, two as “Church of England”, two as “Methodist”, and one as “Presbyterian”. Twenty-six of the men listed their religion ambiguously as “Russian” (i.e. Orthodox). Only ten men identified their faith as “Doukhobor”.
- Curiously, three Doukhobor enlistees – John Holokoff of Veregin, SK, William Strelieff of Kamsack, SK, and George N. Wlasove of Runnymede, SK – appear to have convinced military officials, while already serving overseas in France, that they were actually Austrian or Polish nationals and were summarily discharged as “Alien Enemies” on that basis.
- At least eleven Doukhobors (18%) deserted after enlisting. Nine of them - Alex Antifaev and James Posnikoff of Arran, SK, George Danshin of Canora, SK, Peter Gritch, George Velasoff/Wlosove and Bill Popoff of Kamsack, SK, William Katilnikoff of Blaine Lake, SK, John Karaloff of Camberly, SK, and Peter Konkin of Blaine Lake, SK - deserted soon after enlisting, before their units had left for overseas; these men were arrested and sent to clearing depots; Antifaev, Posnikoff, Gritch, and Karaloff were subsequently remobilized while Danshin, Katilnikoff, Velasoff, Popoff and Konkin were dishonorably discharged. Similarly, Samuel Karaloff of Blaine Lake, SK and John Namonchen of Langham, SK were charged with being “illegally absent” from their training units, tried by a court of inquiry and dishonorably discharged.
- Interestingly, three Doukhobor enlistees were court-martialed while serving overseas then dishonorably discharged: John Zmaeff of Swan River, MB for “disobeying lawful orders from a superior officer” and “acting to the prejudice of good order and military discipline” in 1917; Fred Sherstabetaff of Blaine Lake, SK for “leading and taking part in a mutiny or refusing to report soldiers planning to mutiny” and “striking or threatening a superior officer” in 1919; and John Nevacshonoff of Thrums, BC for being “absent without leave” in 1918.

### ***Theatre of War***

Most of the Doukhobor men initially enlisted in the 188<sup>th</sup> (Saskatchewan), 214<sup>th</sup> (Saskatchewan), 226<sup>th</sup> (Men of the North), 232<sup>nd</sup> (Saskatchewan), 251<sup>st</sup> (Good Fellows), or 144<sup>th</sup> (Winnipeg Rifles) Battalions, none which saw active service. Instead, upon disembarking in England, these battalions were absorbed into the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalions, and its personnel were used to reinforce other units fighting in France and Flanders, where they were heavily involved in trench warfare throughout their service on the Western Front. Conditions on the Front were brutal, with constant dampness, mud and infestation by rats and lice; they faced continuous danger from enemy artillery and snipers, with daily duties involving endless, back-breaking work to maintain the trenches and barbed wire. They suffered from constant exhaustion, poor sanitation, and the ever-present risk of trench foot, trench fever, and other diseases.

### **Medals**

It can be pointed out that two Doukhobor servicemen received medals for exceptional acts of courage. On November 19, 1917, James J. Holoboff of Canora, SK was awarded the Military Medal for individual acts of gallantry; in this case, for “leading a bombing party through cellars and succeeding in capturing fourteen enemy prisoners located in one cellar, which was connected by telephone, and contained maps and a store of bombs and small arms ammunition.” On January 14, 1917, Henry Storshoff of Kamsack, SK was awarded the Russian Cross of Saint George 4th Class, a medal awarded by Tsar Nicholas II to Russian and Allied soldiers for acts of bravery in battle. Other Doukhobor servicemen received a Class ‘A’ War Service Badge after serving on the Front and being honorably discharged.

### **Casualties**

For many Doukhobors enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces, the realities and horrors of war took an emotional as well as physical toll. Several – such as Nicoli Voikin of Arran, SK - were “dangerously wounded” by enemy forces and hospitalized for extended periods. At least one man – John Zmaeff of Arran, SK – self-inflicted a gunshot wound in an attempt to be discharged. Some subsequently recovered and returned to active service until demobilization. Others - at least ten Doukhobors - were discharged as “medically unfit” after being injured, falling ill or suffering shell shock while serving. These included: Fred Isavoloff of Buchanan, SK; Coozma Diakoff, Samuel Kolesnikov and John Maloff of Kamsack, SK; Alex Lakten and Nick Yaschenkoff of Veregin, SK; Simeon Postnekoff of Blaine Lake, SK; Nick Voikin of Petrofka, SK, William Markin of Winnipeg, MB, and Alex Antifaev of Arran, SK; the latter having succumbed to his wounds soon after discharge.

Finally, there were at least two Doukhobor casualties. Walter Storgeoff of Kamsack, SK died in 1917 at age 21 of injuries sustained while serving in the 46th Battalion (Saskatchewan Regiment) of the Canadian Infantry; he is buried at Villers Station Cemetery northwest of Villers-au-Bois, France. William Gloeboff of Kamsack, SK died in 1918 at age 22 of wounds suffered on the Drocourt-Queant line while serving in the 8th Battalion (Manitoba Regiment) of the Canadian Infantry; he is buried at Ligny-Saint-Flochel British cemetery west of Arras, France.

It is hoped this explanatory note will shed light on this crucial yet underdeveloped topic, which, to date, has received negligible publicization within popular discourse nor substantial scholarly attention in academic literature. The goal of this note is to provide foundational understanding and stimulate further inquiry into an area that has been largely overlooked.

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