



Vladimir Krajina: World War II Hero and Ecology Pioneer

Jan Drabek

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In 1939 the botanist Vladimir Krajina joined the Czech Resistance and quickly became one of its leaders. Incredible escapes from the Gestapo followed while some 20,000 radio messages were sent by his group to London, among them those about the pending invasion of the Balkans and of the Soviet Union. As the strongest anti-Communist Party's general secretary he escaped from the country on skis after the Communist takeover. Personally thanked for his wartime effort by Winston Churchill, Krajina came to the University of British Columbia where as a professor of botany he battled the forest barons and their practice of clear-cutting and slash burning. He then turned his attention to saving pristine areas of the province, earning the title of father of the Ecological Reserve Program, since replicated throughout Canada. As a Companion of the Order of Canada, he returned triumphantly to Prague in 1990 to receive the Order of the White Lion, the highest Czechoslovak award, from President Vaclav Havel. Krajina died peacefully in Vancouver in 1992 as one of those happy individuals who had achieved practically everything they had set out to do in life.

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