**The Keokuk Peace Letters**

**& The Tallinn Estonia Tragedy**

(Slide 1 - Cover)

The story I share with you today concerns two of Rotary’s essential basic values: mutual understanding among the peoples of the world and a commitment to supporting world peace. The story begins ninety years ago, June 1931.

(Slide 2 – Vienna Music Hall)

The 22nd Annual Rotary International Convention took place in Vienna, six years after the first Austrian Club had been founded in that city. Rotarians from around the world arrived in the country’s capital.

(Slide 3 – Conference Speakers)

Among the speakers at the convention were numerous important personalities of that period, among them

(Slide 4 – Max Weinmann circled)

textile manufacturer Max Weinmann, a founding member of the Munich Rotary Club, who was honored by Rotary International for his service. Also,

(Slide 5 – Weinmann/Cecil circled)

Viscount Robert Cecil of Britain, one of the architects of the League of Nations. He was granted the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1937. And there were many others.

(Slide 6 – Agenda)

It is hard to imagine that Rotary International would ever again assemble such an impressive group of speakers, and their grave message at this time and place foretold a tragedy speeding towards Europe and Asia. Plenary discussions included

(Slide 7 – Agenda, Disarmament)

Disarmament, and more alarmingly….the build-up of arms by belligerent nations during a time of economic crisis.

(Slide 8 – Agenda, League of Nations)

The League of Nations

(Slide 9 – Agenda, Tariff Problems)

Tariff Problems

(Slide 10 – Agenda, International Finance)

International Finances, addressing the world financial crisis as well as ongoing war reparations; its resentment and hardships, particularly in Germany.

(Slide 11 – Agenda, World Crisis)

World Crisis, Organization of Production and Consumption

(Slide 12 – Agenda, International Unemployment)

International Unemployment, discussing the dangers of nationalistic ideas fermented in times of high unemployment.

(Slide 13 – Agenda, World Prosperity)

World Prosperity and Standards of Living, discussing the decline in standard of living since the start of the financial crisis. Again, a dangerous situation where people start looking towards authoritarian leadership for a quick resolution of current conditions. You must remember that by June 1931,

(Slide 14 – Mussolini)

Mussolini and his supporters had already Marched on Rome (an event that never really happened) and were now fully in power.

(Slide 15 – Bolshevik demonstration)

Russia was no longer a monarchy, instead controlled by a group of thugs calling themselves Bolsheviks, with a new, brutal, authoritarian leader. Communism was feared by all the West, with countries ignoring individual rights and tolerating persecution of minorities within their own communities at any hint of opposing Communism.

(Slide 16 – Cover of book **1931**)

Expanding out of Bavaria, the Nazi party and it’s nationalistic, racist ideals was growing in popularity.

(Slide 17 – Japanese soldiers in Seoul)

And in Asia, Japan had invaded and annexed Korea and was ready to, soon, move next into Manchuria.

(Slide 18 - Fulton)

Among the 4,300 attendees at the Vienna Conference was thirty-three-year-old American William Jewett Fulton, a member of the Rotary Club of Keokuk, Iowa.

(Slide 19 – Fulton/Chief Keokuk)

This small town of 10,000 inhabitants on the Mississippi River is named after a positive-minded Indian chieftain. Unlike his peers, Chief Keokuk did not go on the warpath against the white Americans, who, in the nineteenth century, had penetrated ever farther into the lands of the indigenous peoples. Instead chose a path of negotiation and the quest for peaceful solutions.

(Slide 20 – Stock Market, Unemployed Man)

Following the convention, Fulton and his wife, Louesa, traveled, for several weeks, throughout Europe, where his impressions were impacted by economic, social, and political tensions of that time. Dark clouds were forming in Europe and throughout the world. The global economic crisis of 1929 had entered its third year with no sign of improvement. Nations imposed punitive tariff duties for imported goods as a means of helping the home economy. Banking systems were collapsing. Nationalism was on the rise. When Fulton returned to Keokuk, he reported to his fellow club members on the disquieting mood he had sensed during his trip, and the Keokuk Club decided to issue a warning about the pervading general unrest of the day.

(Slide 21 – Keokuk Rotary Letter, Paris)

And so, the small club from Keokuk set out in December 1931 to send a message by letter to all non-English-speaking Rotary Clubs outside the United States. Over five hundred letters were individually typed, addressed, and sent by mail. (Here is the letter sent to the Rotary Club of Paris)

(Slide 22 – Letter hilighted)

Among other things, the letter stated: “Following the old Indian custom, we invite the Rotary Club of Paris to smoke the Pipe of Peace with us in the spirit, as our expression of international good will and fellowship. - We would be most happy to receive a reply from you, as it is our sincere desire to establish and perpetuate Rotary contacts and friendships outside of our country.”

(Slide 23 – PPL collection)

Of the 504 letters Fulton sent he received a total of 201 responses from 44 different countries. By chance, these neatly filed-away letters were found in a bank safe a few years ago, having almost been disposed of by the bank. I rescued this treasure in 2016 and

(Slide 24 – **Die Peace Pipe Briefe**)

published it in book form in June 2019. With the help of several world-wide colleagues, we have studied a portion of these letters. The extracted stories of the Rotarians and Rotary Clubs of that time are simply amazing, and often tragic. This could not be more true than the Rotary Club of Tallinn, Estonia. This club, chartered 1929, received Rtn. Fulton’s letter, and its Club President wrote a response 26 February 1932. But, before I go deeper into this group of men, you must understand where Estonia is today and difficult path it took to get there.

(Slide 25 – Kremlin with Soviet flag)

On the evening of December 25, 1990, the flag of the Soviet Union was lowered at the Kremlin for the last time,

(Slide 26 – Russia flag)

replaced by the tri-color flag of Russia.

(Slide 27 – Soviet Union map)

After 50 years of hardline control over the citizens of Russia and 14 republics which comprised the Union, the Soviet Union collapsed. Decades of economic pressure pushed

(Slide 28 – Map with Gorbachev)

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to make social, political, and economic changes throughout the Union, in hopes that the “softening” would hold the Union together. Just the opposite happened.

(Slide 29 – Map Baltic States)

Earlier that year, the three Baltic States; Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, declared their independence from the Soviet Union in an uprising which came to be known as the “Singing Revolution.” In each of these countries, masses of their citizens stood up to Red Army soldiers, their only weapons being their voices.

(Slide 30 – Estonia circled)

For the country of Estonia, this was the second time, and in some ways even the third or fourth time, in the 20th century which they celebrated their independence. Over the ages, this small nation, rich in natural resources and strategically positioned on the straights of Finland, was invaded and occupied by foreign forces; Germans, Danes, Russians, etc. Because of these incursions on their soil, the early 20th-century population was a mix of ethnic Russians, Germans, and native Estonians. In 1917, while the Russians were occupied with the Bolshevik Revolution and war with Germany (WW1), Estonians struck to gain their independence.

(Slide 31 – Estonia independence parade)

They formally declared their independence on February 24, 1918,

(Slide 32 – German army in Tallinn)

only to be invaded by Germany the very next day, and by early March, Germans occupied all of Estonia.

(Slide 33 - Newspaper)

The German defeat of World War One forced their armies to vacate the Baltic States, November 1918. By the end of that same month, however, the now Russian Bolshevicks invaded Estonia once again.

(Slide 34 – Trench fighting)

Not ready to give up their newly found independence, Estonians fought back. After a costly war (for both sides), a historic peace agreement was reached after negotiations at Tartu.

(Slide 35 – Flag of Estonia)

This is where our Peace Pipe Letters story picks up, in the months following Estonia’s independence, 1920.

(Slide 36 – Herbert Gott)

Let me begin by introducing American, Herbert Gott. Herbert Gott was born 1884, Gloucester, Massachusetts. He graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1910), earning a degree in Engineering. Gott went to work for the New York City Metropolitan Street Railway Company, and then for a manufacturer of greenhouse buildings, but soon decided he was interested in some other kind of work.

(Slide 37 - YMCA)

He found his life’s calling in 1913, when he took a job running programs for young men at the famous 86th Street New York City YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association).

(Slide 38 – Map Russia)

When the Great War broke out, Gott volunteered, through the YMCA, to aid German prisoners of war held in Russian camps. He was in Russia during, and witnessed, the Bolshevik revolution, at one point fleeing to Manchuria with his family to escape the violence.

(Slide 39 – Manchuria YMCA)

Not missing a chance for advancing his cause, he managed to set up a local YMCA there.

(Slide 40 - Map Estonia)

After the war, Gott returned to New York for a short period. When an opportunity arose to serve in Estonia, which had just ended its war of independence with Russia, he immediately volunteered. Gott arrived in Tallinn, March 1920 and began working with the 20,000 Russian refugees, displaced in Estonia. He would spend the next 12 years there.

(Slide 41 – First four Rotarians)

We do not know if Herbert Gott was a Rotarian prior to arriving in Estonia, but he was certainly aware of the organization. In June 1929, he brought together six associates in Tallinn, with the purpose of organizing and applying for a Rotary club charter. Included in this group of seven:

(Slide 42 – Juhan Kukk)

Juhan Kukk, who served in several state executive positions from 1918 – 1923, including Prime Minister (1922-23). He was a university lecturer and director at a local cotton factory. He served as representative from the Baltic States to Rotary International.

(Slide 43 – Joakim Puhk)

Joakim Puhk, owner of the largest Estonian trade company, J. Puhk and Sons, and wealthiest person in Estonia during that time. He served on the Board of directors for Estonian Lloyd Insurance and Lamarine manufacturing. He also served as Chairman of the Association of Wholesalers, Chairman of the Board of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Consul General of Finland in Estonia.

(Slide 44 – Klaus Scheel)

Klaus Scheel, director of C. Scheel & Co., Estonia’s largest private bank.

(Slide 45 – Harry E Carlson)

Harry E. Carlson, US Consul in Estonia.

(Slide 46 – Johan Laidoner)

General Johan Laidoner, Commander-in-Chief of Estonia armed forces, 1918-20 and 1934-40. He also represented Estonia at the plenary sessions of the League of Nations in Geneva.

(Slide 47 – Ants Piip)

And finally, Anton “Ants” Piip, Professor of International Law at the University of Tartu.

(Slide 48 – RC Tallinn letter)

In addition to being a charter member of RC Tallinn, Professor Piip was club President in 1931-32. It was he who answered Jewett Fulton’s letter, 1932.

(Slide 49 – RC Tallin letter hilighted)

In his letter, Professor Piip makes light of his last name, which in Estonian means “pipe.”

(Slide 50 – RC Tallin letter highlighted)

He writes further that he was part of the delegation which signed the Treaty of Peace with Russia (1920), ending the civil war in Estonia. Piip’s letter is beautifully written with a high command of English language.

(Slide 51 – Ants Piip)

Professor Ants Piip was born 28 February 1884 in Tuhalaane, Estonia (then part of the Russian Empire). His education included studies in Latvia, Saint Petersburg, and Berlin. He was a lawyer, diplomat, and politician, beloved by his fellow countrymen. He was the first Head of State of Estonia (1920-21), and the Fifth Prime Minister. He served as Minister of Foreign Affairs (1919-1940) and Ambassador to the United States (1923-25).

(Slide 52 – Paris peace conference)

Piip was member of the Estonian Foreign Mission in Saint Petersburg and London, participating in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, which set the terms for peace for the defeated Central Powers.

(Slide 53 – Tartu peace conference)

In 1919-20, he was a member of the Estonian delegation at the Tartu Peace Negotiations, mentioned in his letter. In this treaty, an agreement between Estonia and the Federal Russian Republic of the Soviets, the Soviets recognized the sovereignty and independence of the state of Estonia.

(Slide 54 – Josef Stalin)

On the Soviet side of negotiators in Tartu was 41-year-old Josef Stalin, a confidant of Vladimir Lenin and rising star in the newly formed Soviet regime. Piip and his colleagues could not have possibly imagined the events which would unfold over the next 12 years, nor that they were sitting across from one who would become the most notorious, ruthless killer in the history of mankind, who would order their own death sentences.

(Slide 55 – SLIDE NEEDED)

This was the first time in 200 years that Estonia was not under Russian control. It could not have come at a more difficult time; just after the Great War which was settled with terms unagreeable to almost all sides, soon to be thrown into world-wide economic depression, and to have two aggressive, nationalistic powers as your neighbors, both with an eye on your lands. The Great Depression was the new country’s first real test.

(Slide 56 – SLIDE NEEDED)

Estonia suffered much like all other countries throughout Europe and North America; industrial manufacturing was down 20%, agriculture down 45%, consequently, unemployment jumped to unthinkable levels while the standard-of-living dramatically decreased. At the same time, Russia continued to cause problems, sending in agitators, flooding the country with pro-Russian propaganda, and appealing to ethnic Russians within Estonia. This led to political turmoil.

(Slide 57 – SLIDE NEEDED)

By 1934, the country saw an easing of the effects of the great depression, but the controlling political party had lost the confidence of Estonians, and the opposing party (Vaps), who was promoting a Fascist-style government, was about to win an electoral victory. Not willing to give up power, nor their hard-fought independence, Estonian President Konstantin Pats and and Chief of Armed Forces, Johan Laidoner conducted a military coup, 12 March 1934, just before scheduled elections. They arrested hundreds of their political opponents and declared a six-month state of emergency. Political meetings were banned. That week’s Rotary meeting would have been most interesting.

(Slide 58 – Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty signing)

Between the two world wars, Estonia pursued a position of neutrality. However, Estonia’s fate was decided when the Soviets and Germans signed a non-aggression pact, August 1939. Hidden in the details of this agreement was the dividing of eastern Europe into “areas of influence,” a polite way to name the countries you will be invading.

(Slide 59 – SLIDE NEEDED)

When the Soviets signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany, 1939, terms of the Tartu Treaty were essentially cancelled. The very next month, September 1939, Estonia (along with the other Baltic states) was strong-armed into signing a mutual assistance treaty with the Soviets. This agreement, signed by Ants Piip, allowed Russian military use of Estonian naval bases and other resources. In return, the Soviets agreed Estonia will remain an independent nation. Piip was told if he did not agree to this, the Soviets would invade and claim Estonia as their own. With recent Polish events in mind, the three Baltic states had no other choice. Perhaps Piip gave thought to Fulton’s letter and Chief Keokuk; negotiating with the US government, with its endless supply of soldiers and weapons. Like Chief Keokuk, Piip chose the least-worse action, hoping Stalin was speaking the truth.

(Slide 60 – Map, invasion of Estonia)

Ignoring the agreement they had signed nine months prior, the Soviets invaded the Baltic states (June 1940) and annexed this territory as part of the Soviet Union.

(Slide 61 – NKVD officers)

Immediately behind the Red Army was these guys, the NKVD. Stalin’s secret police. The tragic consequences that followed includes the elimination of current and prior leadership in Estonian government, military, and industries. Overnight, persons of influence, wealth, or trouble-makers were rounded up by the NKVD and either executed or deported (often with their families) to Russia. This was by design. Many thousands were sent to work camps, gulags, with 10-, 15-, and 25-year sentences to hard labor. Others, typically the surviving families, were sent into exile, newly settled areas in Siberia. The returning trains were filled with ethnic Russians, who filled the homes and jobs of the deported Estonians.

(Slide 62 – Map, siege on Stalingrad))

The “Russification” of Estonia was interrupted April 1941 – September 1944, when Nazi-German forces, took control of the country, part of their drive to destroy the Soviets. This invasion was initially greeted by Estonians, who thought they were getting back their independence. They even had a large, armed force numbering 50,000, The Forest Brothers, which helped push the Soviets back to the east. Very soon, however, it became apparent that the Nazi road map for Estonia looked very similar to the Soviet’s. It began with the collection of all Jews, who were sent to concentration camps.

(Slide 63 – SLIDE NEEDED)

After 3 ½ years of brutal fighting, resulting in heavy losses on the Eastern Front, World War 2 made a turn. Germans retreated out of Russia and the Baltic Countries, September 1944, only to be replaced, again, by the Red Army and the NKVD. Stalin’s police now had an even longer list of targets….adding those who had collaborated with the hated Germans.

(Slide 64 – Ants Piip)

On 30 June 1940, Professor Ants Piip was arrested by the NKVD, and sent to the Ussolski labor camp in Russia. Later he was transferred to a camp in Klepja. While on a work crew in Klepja, Piip was visited by two deputies of the Soviet party, inquiring about his relationship to Josef Stalin. Ants, who by this time was very sick and weak, took out a photograph of himself and Josef Stalin, taken at Tartu, 1920, signed by Stalin. The deputies returned the photo and moved on. Within days, Piip was moved to a camp in Nyrop. His imprisoned fellow countrymen were delighted, for they knew Ants was near death, and his connection with this high-ranking Soviet party member was surely going to get him the medical attention he needed. When Ants arrived in Nyrop, he was placed into an isolation cell and died within weeks. Of the founding members of RC Tallinn, Professor Piip was not the only one who fell victim to the NKVD. From the group who met to organize this Rotary club, 1929:

(Slide 65 – Harry Carlson)

Harry Carlson and his family left Estonia, January 1937, and went on to serve at posts throughout Europe and the United States. He died 21 October 1960, Sheffield, Massachusetts.

(Slide 66 – Herbert Gott)

Herbert Gott’s 12 years in Estonia, and previous years spent in Russia, was at a great detriment to his health. He returned to the United States due to health issues, moving to La Jolla, California in hopes that the fair weather would do him good. He died there, January 1941.

(Slide 67 – Estonia sports)

Among his many contributions to Estonia, Gott introduced the country to volleyball and basketball, two sports which this country thrives, at an international level, to this day.

(Slide 68 – Juhan Kukk)

Juhan Kukk was arrested on 16 October 1940, sentenced to 8 years. He died in captivity, at Kargopol, Russia work camp, 4 December 1942.

(Slide 69 – Joakim Puhk)

Joakim Puhk was arrested 31 August 1940. He was no stranger to the Soviets. At age 17, Puhk took part in the 1905 Revolution, during which he was captured by the Russians and found guilty of revolutionary activities. He was imprisoned at Kresto Prison 1907 – 1909, given a light sentence because of his young age. This time, however, he was sentenced to death by special conference, and immediately executed.

(Slide 70 – Johan Laidoner)

Johan Laidoner was arrested on 28 June 1941, sentenced to 25 years. He spent time at prisons of Pensa, Kirov, Ivanovo, Moscow, Butyrka, and Vladmir. He died in captivity, 1953.

(Slide 71 – Klaus Scheel)

This brings us to the last founding member, Klaus Scheel. While Scheel was born in Kadrina, Estonia (1890), he was of German descent. His Tallinn bank fared well in the years up to the year of independence, catering to senior military officials from Estonia. Following the Russian Revolution, however, he found a new best customer…..that being the Soviets.

(Slide 72 – Heist book cover)

As bank director, Klaus Scheel was involved in brokering the sale of valuables stolen from nobles in Russia. Bribe and blackmail money flowed into his office, taken by the Bolshevicks from churches and wealthy individuals in the Russian empire. With his newfound fortune, Scheel was able to purchase, in part and/or whole, several Estonian companies. He was also able to solely fund a shale oil production company.

(Slide 73 – Resettled Germans, Poland)

In 1939, Germans outside of the homeland were invited to come back to Germany. More than 14,000 Estonian Germans left during the years 1939-1940. Scheel, however, was not initially one of them.

(Slide 74 – Wilhelm Kepler)

In January 1940, Hitler’s personal financial advisor, Dr. Wilhelm Keppler, personally offered Scheel German citizenship, and in June he finally accepted. The reason Scheel did not relocate earlier was two-fold; first, it took time to liquidate his businesses, AND, most importantly, he had Jewish blood in his lineage. By June, however, Scheel either had to face the occupying Soviets or chance relocating to Germany. He chose to relocate. On June 25, 1940, Klaus Scheel and his family stepped onto German soil.

(Slide 75 – Map Europe)

By Autumn 1944, however, Scheel could sense the direction of the war for Germany. Using his Swedish connections, he left Germany for Stockholm,

(Slide 76 – Map, arrow toward Brazil)

then on to a new life in Brazil. He stayed in Brazil till 1954, when he came back to Hamburg. He died in Baden Baden, 1961.

(Slide 77 – SLIDE NEEDED)

These founding members were not the exception in receiving brutal treatment from the NKVD. When RC Tallinn was shut down by the Soviets, June 1940, the club had inducted a total of 91 members. 16 were members of German descent, who returned to Germany or German-occupied countries. 7 were foreign nationals, including 3 Americans, again allowed to return to their native land. 5 were of Russian descent, were given free pass. 11 escaped to another country, most to Sweden. 12 either died before 1940, or had a fate not known. 2 were Jewish members, captured by the SS and murdered at concentration camps. 1 committed suicide. That leaves least 37 men of Estonian descent. All were arrested by the NKVD. From this number, 6 were imprisoned and survived. 22 were imprisoned and died while in captivity. 9 were immediately executed.

(Slide 78 – Konstantin Pats)

Included in these numbers was then President of Estonia, and Rotarian (RC Tallinn) Konstantin Pats, undoubtedly the most influential politician of Estonia up to Soviet annexation. Pats was a journalist, and he started several different newspapers throughout his life, each with very pointed political view.

(Slide 79 – Bloody Sunday)

As an activist, Pats also took part in the 1905 Revolution, supporting self-governing reforms and national autonomy. At the height of the revolution, his newspaper was closed and his staff arrested. Pats avoided arrest and escaped to Switzerland. In his absence, the Russians sentenced him to death. In 1906, Pats moved to Helsinki and was reunited with his family. There, he was an editor of a Saint Petersburg newspaper…while living in Finland. In the years that followed, the Russians rescinded his death sentence and reduced his charges. Pats returned to Estonia where he was arrested and jailed at Koesty Prison (Saint Petersburg), February 1910 – March 1911. Banned from returning to Estonia, Pats had to use his professional and political connections to work his way back into the country.

(Slide 80 – Declaration)

In 1917, not changing in his ways, Pats was now head of a provisional government working to gain independence. When the October Revolution broke out that year (Bolshevik Revolution), he was forced to go underground with his activities. While the Russians were occupied with their own Civil War and war with Germany, Pats was one of three members of the Estonian Salvation Committee that issued their Declaration of Independence, 19 February 1918. One week later, the country was overrun by the German army. Pats was head of the provincial government up to the second half of the German occupation, when he was arrested by the Germans (16 June 1918), sent to a prison camp in Grodno, Poland. He was released 18 November that same year, one week after the end of World War 1.

(Slide 81 – SLIDE NEEDED)

Pats returned to Estonia, took over as Minister of War. The now Bolsheviks had returned, and Estonians were ready to defend their land. Pats was charged with fielding an army for Estonia’s war of independence against Russia.

(Slide 82 – SLIDE NEEDED)

During the 20’s and 30’s, Pats served five times as State Elder, an equivalent to President. When he and fellow Rotarian, General Johan Laidoner, headed off political defeat with a military coup (1934), they never relinquished that power till the Soviets moved in, June 1940. He, himself, had become an authoritarian figure. During the end his presidency, the Soviets had taken control. Pats remained president but was placed under house arrest. He was forced to sign over 200 decrees for the new Soviet regime. For the duration of this period, Pats was convinced that Estonia would not be Sovietized.

(Slide 83 – Annexation ceremony)

That change on 21 July 1940, when Soviets proclaimed the country as Estonia SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic). On the same day as this proclamation, Pats sent his son, Viktor, to the US Consul in Tallinn to appeal for protection and asylum for himself and his family. The next day, they were granted diplomatic visas. The Pats family, however, either did not receive their visas, or the Soviets did not recognize them, as they were arrested and deported 30 July 1940, sent to the city of Ufa in southwest Russia. The family was initially placed under house arrest, but after Pats made anti-Stalin comments to an undercover NKVD officer, his status changed.

(Slide 84 – Pats prisoner)

Pats and his two sons were sent to were sent to Butyrka prison (same prison holding Johan Laidoner). His wife was sent to a work camp in Siberia. His grandchildren were paced in orphanages. The Soviets not only considered Pats a felon, but also mentally insane. Authorities based their insanity diagnosis on his constant insistence that he was the president of Estonia. Pats died, 1956, at an insane asylum in Russia.

(Slide 85 – SLIDE NEEDED)

It is hard to imagine a person giving more to their country as did Konstantin Pats. Living in exile, arrested, imprisoned by both the Germans and Soviets, sentenced to death, he lived most of his adult life on the cusp of dying for his country. To his credit, he enacted many reforms during the six-year period where he suspended elections, and Estonia’s economy improved tremendously. Historians recognize that Pats and his supporters acted with the encouragement from competing political parties, who saw the country slipping into chaos and possibly even civil war.

(Slide 86 – Max Weinmann)

We have studied many Peace Pipe Letter clubs, containing countless stories of human tragedy. Max Weinmann, mentioned as a noted speaker at the Vienna conference,

(Slide 87 – Weinmann family tree)

along with his wife and seven immediate family members, were all murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust. This story is repeated in numerous German clubs.

(Slide 88 – Club Banner)

I have yet to find, however, a club which suffered so many casualties as did RC Tallinn. And not just Rotarians who suffered. The country’s political and military leadership was deported almost entirely, including 10 of 11 ministers and 68 of 120 members of parliament. Between 1939 and 1945, the population of Estonia declined 25%.

(Slide 89 – Screenshot website)

RC Tallinn was re-constituted 1991. Today It is a thriving club with 38 members and sponsor of several new clubs in and around Tallinn. They proudly display their history on the club website.

(Slide 90 – SLIDE NEEDED)

“Russification” and “Germanization” are like policies, used by the respective regimes to strip an annexed or conquered country of all identity of its heritage, language, leadership, etc. You then get rid of, by whatever means necessary (i.e., deport, execute, imprison, exile), any un-desirables and replace with your own ethnic settlers. It is a horrible, brutal policy used by the most wicked of men.

(Slide 91 - Crimea)

Consequences of this policy lives even today. Russian invasions into Crimea and Eastern Ukraine (February 2014) were justified by Vladimir Putin because, as he claims, these areas are dominated by ethnic Russians, who speak Russian, and have close ties to Moscow. He is correct! Moscow made it that way in the 1940’s. The original inhabitants are long buried under the icy tundra of Northern Siberia.

(Slide 92 – Forbes Headline)

And the large-scale corruption in Russia never has ceased. Even today, dirty Russian money flows through an elaborate scheme of Western banks, including Estonia. And, the Russian propaganda and mis-information machine is hard at work as we sit here today.

(Slide 93 – Hilter & Stalin)

In the West, we do not like to think that we took out one mass murderer in World War 2 with the help of another. We abhor the stories of Nazi death camps but think very little of Stalin’s gulags.

(Slide 94 – Keokuk1)

Perhaps, if the Soviets had believed in God,

(Slide 95 – Keokuk2)

they could have argued that it was “God’s will” that they occupy their neighbor’s lands.

(Slide 96 – Keokuk3)

Maybe even call it “Manifest Destiny.”

(Slide 97 – Keokuk4)

Signing treaties they never intended to keep.

(Slide 98 – Keokuk5)

Forcing peoples off lands on which they have lived for thousands of years.

(Slide 99 – Keokuk6)

Exposing them, sometimes intentionally, to deadly diseases.

(Slide 100 – Keokuk7)

Slaughtering their men when they stood up for their rights.

(Slide 101 – Keokuk8)

Killing off their food source to near extinction.

(Slide 102 – Keokuk9)

Pushing them onto wastelands with no possible way to prosper.

(Slide 103 – Keokuk10)

Giving them just enough to barely survive.

(Slide 104 – Keokuk 11)

And pretend like it never happened.

(Slide 105 – Keokuk 12)

Without a doubt,

(Slide 106 – Keokuk 13)

those who win the war get to write history.

(Slide 107 – Conference Invite)

Dealing with these dark chapters of our past is the subject of an upcoming Rotary work conference, May 23 – 27, 2022, held in Northfield, Minnesota. Discussion topics include; Germany’s confrontation with the Holocaust, South Africa’s end of Apartheid, and the United State’s Treatment of Native Americans, as well as 400 Years of Slavery in the New World. You are invited to attend.