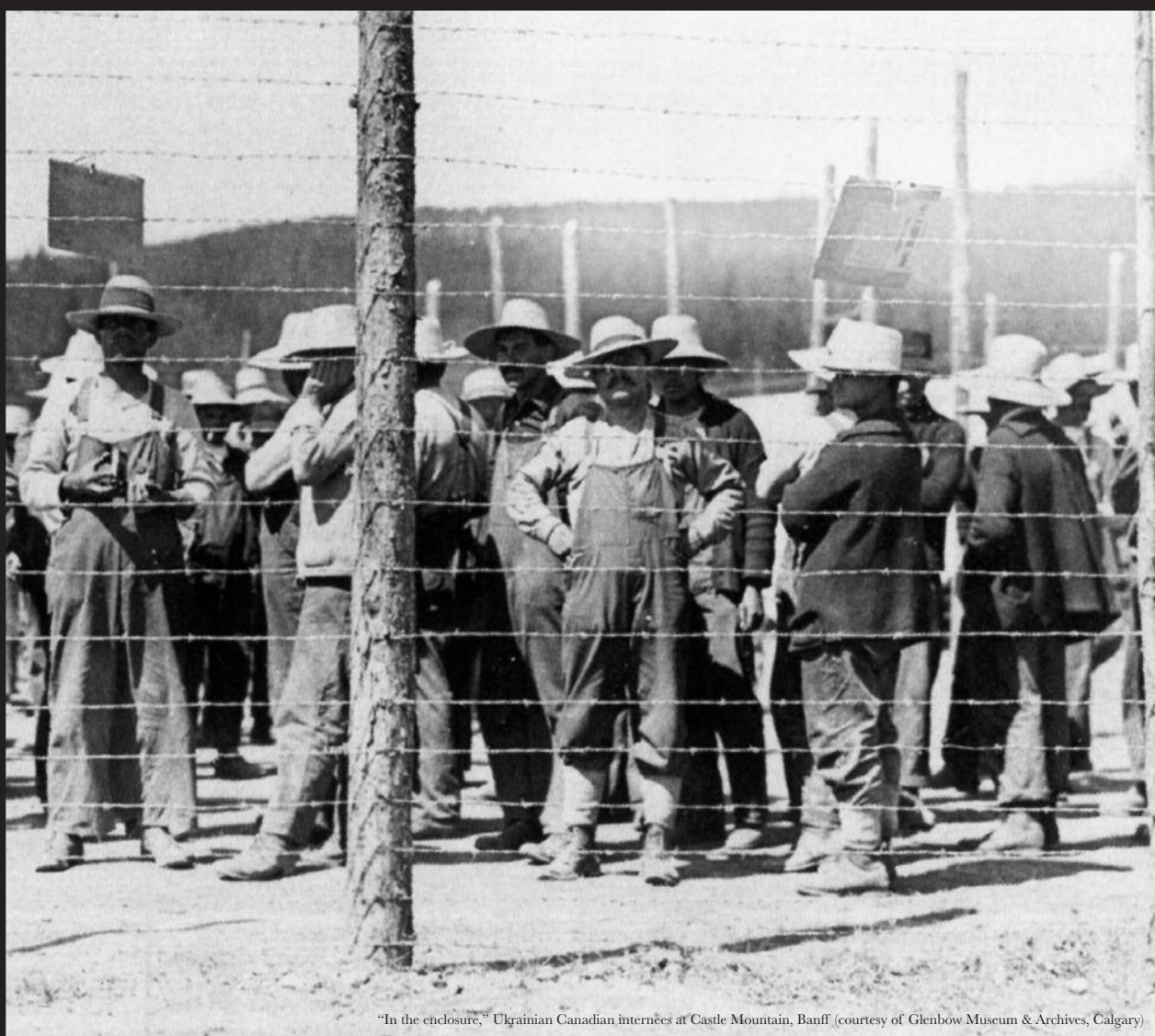


The Canadian Museum for Human Rights: A Canadian Ukrainian Perspective

11 June 2009
Ottawa

Presented to the Content Advisory Committee (CMHR)
by Dr Lubomyr Luciuk, chairman, Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association
on behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress



"In the enclosure," Ukrainian Canadian internees at Castle Mountain, Banff (courtesy of Glenbow Museum & Archives, Calgary)



Ukrainian refugees protesting Soviet oppression, Munich. From Lubomyr Y Luciuk, *Searching For Place: Ukrainian Displaced Persons, Canada and the Migration of Memory* (University of Toronto Press, 2001)

A Canadian Museum: A letter to the editor published in *The Globe and Mail*, 30 May 2009, recalls the experience of Victoria's Tony Taylor: "When I'd only been in Canada about three years, I told a colleague that I could claim to be one-eighths English Methodist and half Russian Jew and wasn't sure what that made me. Quick as a flash, he (Ukrainian Canadian, Toronto native) said: "That's easy – Canadian."

Canada's Ukrainian community is informed by a similar perspective - we believe that as a national museum funded by the public the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) must deal primarily with historical and national human rights and civil liberties issues. As such we recommend that this new museum largely **tell Canadian stories** such as the experience of aboriginal Canadians in the residential schools, Canada's first national internment operations, the Winnipeg General Strike, the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act, the Canadian eugenics movement, Japanese Canadian internment in the Second World War and restrictive immigration policies before, during and after the war - rather than affording a disproportionate amount of attention to non-Canadian events and themes. The latter are already well covered by many other museums and institutions.

An Educational and Interpretive Mandate: Our view is that the CMHR should have a decidedly educational and interpretive mandate rather than one that is research oriented. The latter role is best carried out in existing universities and colleges or by specialized institutes and foundations (e.g. Race Relations Foundation, Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund). The CMHR should also focus on historical rather than contemporary issues and its primary function should be to recall what happened rather than "celebrating" breakthroughs in human rights and civil liberties legislation (e.g. Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms). Welcome as more recent advances in the protection of our basic freedoms are, these positive developments do not undo real historic injustices that often had a debilitating impact on individuals and even entire communities.

Education, not Advocacy: The museum's mandate must specifically prohibit any attempt to craft displays intended to be a "call to action." Advocacy should never be the function of a museum. Special interest or lobby groups must not have, nor come to secure, any undue influence or control over the contents or direction of a Canadian national museum.

Canada's Ukrainian community believes that no national museum, funded by all Canadians, should reflect the particular historical concerns or interests of any one ethnic, religious or racial minority. Therefore we agree with a finding included in the "Final Report" (2 April 2008) of the Antima Group's "Focus Group Testing of the Content for the Proposed Canadian Museum for Human Rights,"¹ namely that a museum "created and funded by the Government of Canada" must not "pick sides" but should "rather depict all the known facts and allow the visitor to draw their own conclusions."

A Shared Perspective – Creating a uniquely Canadian Institution: Recognizing the great difficulty inherent in not "picking sides," especially when the subject under consideration involves an event that took place outside of this country, Canada's Ukrainian community, in concert with our fellow aboriginal Canadians,² recommends that the Canadian Museum for Human Rights concentrate its efforts on the development of exhibits, interpretive programming and collection efforts that treat Canadian issues (e.g. wartime internment operations and the ensuing human rights abuses of Italian and German Canadians; restrictive immigration policies). Doing so would create **a uniquely Canadian institution** rather than simply replicating what other museums around the world are already dealing with and can probably do better. Few, if any, museums outside of Canada devote much space, for example, to the plight of Canada's native communities, to the internment operations of the First World War period or to the expulsion of the Acadians; doing so represents both an obligation and an opportunity for the CMHR.

International Collaboration and “Homeland Issues”: The above-suggested injunction would not, of course, preclude the CMHR from establishing affiliations with research and educational institutions internationally. Given that many Canadians came here fleeing persecution or genocide, and that they and their descendants preserve an abiding concern over what happened elsewhere, we recommend that a permanent gallery be set aside for displays that treat such non-Canadian episodes and themes. Securing exhibits from abroad for display purposes would provide for the ongoing renewal of a portion of the CMHR’s exhibition spaces. We would therefore anticipate and encourage the museum’s curators to seek out, for example, their counterparts at the Institute of Memory of Ukraine and so secure/develop a prominent exhibit on the *Holodomor* (the genocidal Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine). Similarly they might contact their colleagues in the USA to develop materials recalling the work of Raphael Lemkin, an honorary Canadian citizen who coined the term “genocide” (and who, one might add, recognized that the Soviet Terror and Great Famine constituted an act of genocide against the Ukrainian nation).³ This gallery must offer an opportunity for the treatment of the many incidents of genocide and crimes against humanity that have befouled human history and do so in an equitable and inclusive manner without preference to any one group’s particular historical concerns or interpretations.

Outreach and Education: We support wholeheartedly the development of a CMHR website/virtual museum to allow those who can not get to Winnipeg to have access to the information and collections that will eventually be housed there. On site we support the development of interactive and multimedia exhibits for the purpose of engaging younger audiences. We also recommend that the CMHR sponsor traveling exhibits to ensure that its contents are made available across the country.

We do not support subsidizing travel from across Canada to the CMHR. Such a program would discriminate against museums located in the national capital region and against those local, provincial, and regional museums that do not have the benefit of a publicly-funded subsidy. Of course if private donors wish to establish a travel fund we have no objection to them doing so. But to underwrite educational or vacation travel for some Canadians at the expense of all Canadians is not acceptable, even if this will be the first national museum established outside the capital and in a city that was, historically, the centre of Canada’s Ukrainian community.

Governance: A museum funded by all Canadians must not reflect the particular historical concerns or interests of any particular ethnic, religious, or racial minority or political group. Furthermore the senior management and staff of the CMHR must be selected from a pool of qualified candidates after a publicly advertised, national competition. No seats on the board of directors or of any body having any influence over the nature or direction of the CMHR should be reserved or allocated to any donor group or to any individual who gave or raised funds for this project or otherwise advocated for the CMHR’s creation. The CMHR, as a national museum, must be absolutely free of any outside or special interest influence. This is a fundamental governing principle that must never be undone. All positions on the board of directors should also be of a fixed term length (no more than 4 years) and non-renewable, to ensure that its governing body is changed regularly and so kept unbiased and inclusive. Each and every seat on the board of directors of the CMHR or within its senior management and curatorial ranks should be open to any qualified Canadian regardless of her/his ethnic, religious or racial heritage, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or health. To act otherwise contradicts the very essence of the movement for human rights, the core principles of which are equity and inclusiveness.

The Role of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights: Now that the CMHR is becoming a reality it is imperative that the significant public funds needed to develop and sustain it in future are spent and seen to be expended in a manner that creates a genuinely national museum, one truly Canadian in content, its role to serve as a place of commemoration, reflection and education. As such we appreciate the reassurances regarding the Museum’s contents found in the letter of 11 April 2003, signed on behalf of the Asper Foundation by Mr. Moe Levy (see Appendix A). Our community anticipates that the

understandings represented in that letter will be honoured by the board of directors of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

We believe that frankly acknowledging past wrongs helps strengthen our shared sense of national identity. Accordingly, a Canadian national museum sustained by public funds should not only underscore our common commitment to acknowledging historical injustices but also challenge us to look forward and come together as one nation. Such a museum must be inclusive rather than divisive and serve as a nation-building platform rather than as a forum for regurgitating tales of past wrongs, an over-emphasis upon which will only keep us apart.

Canada's Ukrainians have endured more than their share of hardships and discrimination but in concert with our fellow Canadians we stand fully committed to supporting a national institution that will help forge a Canadian identity, one that does not oblige us to forget where we came from yet motivates us all to move forward together.

1. *The Antima Group, "Final Report: Focus Group Testing of the Content for the Proposed Canadian Museum for Human Rights."* Submitted to the Department of Canadian Heritage, 2 April 2008 (Contract Number: 1111-070711/001/CY).

2. *ibid.*

3. *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine* (edited by L Y Luciuk, The Kashtan Press, 2008).

We recommend that the Canadian Museum for Human Rights shall -

- Focus on Canadian stories which will make it a unique national institution.
- Establish a complementary gallery dedicated to exploring, in an inclusive and equitable manner, the experiences of those Canadians who fled persecution and genocide (including the *Holodomor*). No particular ethnic, religious or racial minority's historical experience should dominate the exhibit space within this national and publicly funded museum.
- Develop a permanent exhibit dealing with Canada's first national internment operations (1914-1920) and their crippling impact on Canada's Ukrainian and other east European communities, particularly since the War Measures Act – used to justify the imprisonment and the confiscation of what little wealth these "enemy aliens" had, and their forced labour for the profit of their gaolers – set a precedent for the subsequent mistreatment of Japanese Canadians and others in the Second World War and of some Quebecois in 1970.
- Select its Board of Governors, advisory groups and senior management in a transparent manner independent of the influence of interest groups and from a pool of qualified candidates following a publicly advertised national competition, to serve for fixed, non-renewable terms in office.



The Asper Foundation

(Founded in 1983 by Israel Asper, OC, OM, QC)

Founder, President &
Chief Executive Officer
Israel Asper
OC, OM, QC

Co-Founder,
Deputy Chairman
Babs Asper

Managing Director
Gail Asper

Executive Director
Moses (Moe) Levy
B.Comm (Hons.), MBA

Chief Financial Officer
E. Louise Nebbs
C.A.

Directors
Israel Asper
OC, OM, QC

Babs Asper
David Asper
Gail Asper
Leonard Asper

April 11, 2003

Mr. Paul M. Grod &
Mr. Andrew Hladyshevsky, Q.C.
Ukrainian Canadian Congress
456 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B6

Dear Paul & Andrew,

Re: Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR)

Thank you for your letter to Mr. Israel Asper of March 31, 2003, which was followed up with a personal phone discussion on April 7, 2003. We understand that you wish to support the development of an all-inclusive Canadian genocide museum in Canada and we certainly encourage you to do so. As you are aware, the CMHR goes well beyond a genocide museum. The CMHR's objective is to recognize and celebrate human rights as the foundation for human equality, dignity and freedom.

As requested, I wish to address the four concerns raised in your letter.

1. We wish to point out that our museum proposal acknowledges the Ukrainian Famine/Genocide of 1932-1933. We recognize and will include in the CMHR this Famine/Genocide in which over 7 million people were starved to death. We further agree that this genocide will be featured very clearly, distinctly and permanently in the CMHR. We will work with your organization to ensure that this is accomplished. You may wish to identify the appropriate historians and other resources to begin this process.
2. We regret the omission in the "Human Rights in Canada: A Timeline of Events" of the Internment of Ukrainian Canadians during the First World War and agree that it should be included. To this end, our proposal document has been revised to include this important part of Canadian history. Please be assured that it will be included as part of "The Canadian Stories Gallery". A revised Volume I: Proposal will be sent to you next week which shows this inclusion. Again, the support of your organization in assisting us tell this history would be appreciated.

Ste. 1504-201 Portage Ave.,
TD Centre
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 3K6
Phone: (204) 989-5537
Facsimile: (204) 989-5536

Printed on Recycled Paper

3. We recognize that the Ukrainian people were victims of the Nazis and will portray this historical fact. The intent of the Museum is not to single out any one group but portray the human costs when human rights are abused. As discussed, the Museum will portray and focus on how people can make a difference. For example, of the 19,706 "Righteous Among the Nations" as identified by Yad Vashem, Israel's Memorial to the Holocaust, almost 10% or 1,881 are of Ukrainian descent. The fourth largest of any country or ethnic origin.
4. On the governance issue, as shown in our proposal, a national Board of Trustees will govern the Museum. This Board will include representatives of the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg and the Friends of the Museum, based on their percentage contribution of the initial capital requirements of the museum. As you are aware, the Friends of the Museum intends to raise 30% of the capital requirements or \$60 million. Accordingly, the Friends organization will appoint the nominees on a pro-rata basis to the Board of Trustees of the Museum. Our intent as you know, is to have founding members who will form the permanent governing body of the Friends organization. We hope that the UCC will play a role, not only as a founding member of Friends but will also assist in other fundraising objectives as outlined in items 1 and 2 above.

Please note, as discussed on April 10th, the governance issues are subject to change and would depend on the wishes of the three levels of government, the Forks Board and the Friends of the Museum.

I trust that this response will assist us in moving forward to have you as a partner in this endeavour. In my letter to you of January 6th, 2003, I reiterated Dr. Israel Asper's personal commitment to continue to work with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress in telling its history of human rights abuses in Canada and Ukraine and to work with your representative towards this objective. Once again, please let me confirm this commitment.

If you are satisfied that we can move forward, we would appreciate a letter of support by Friday, April 11, 2003, as we wish to include it in our media package for the announcement scheduled for April 17th. We hope as well, that you and your representatives will join us in this historic announcement.

I look forward to your early response.

Sincerely,



Moe Levy
Executive Director
ML/hm
Enc.

Copy: Eugene Czolij, I. H. Asper, Gail Asper

The
Asper
Foundation

Ste. 1504-201 Portage Ave.,

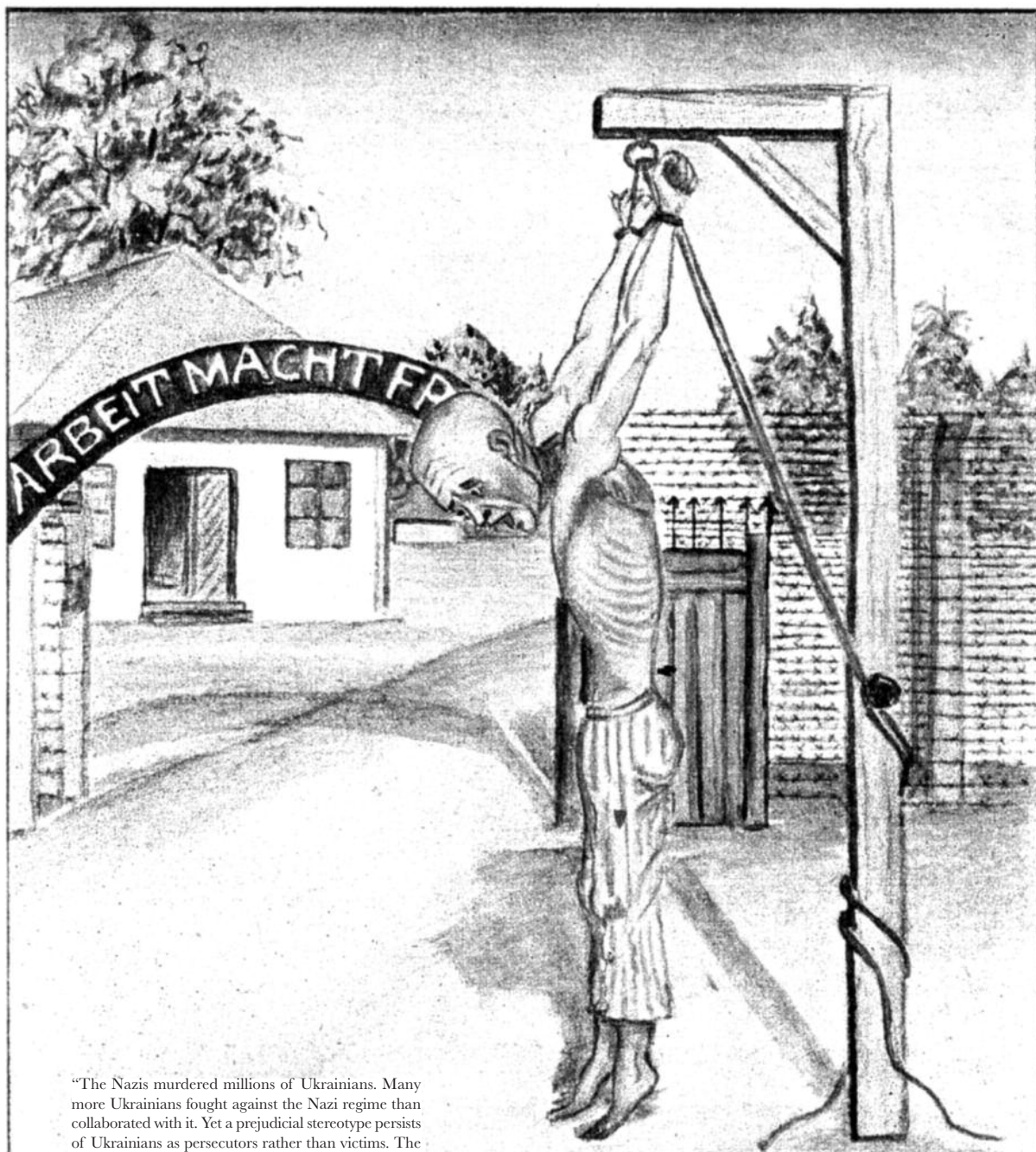
TD Centre

Winnipeg, MB

R3B 3K6

Phone: (204) 989-5537

Facsimile: (204) 989-5536



"The Nazis murdered millions of Ukrainians. Many more Ukrainians fought against the Nazi regime than collaborated with it. Yet a prejudicial stereotype persists of Ukrainians as persecutors rather than victims. The Soviets and others opposed to Ukraine's independence saw to that. This memoir will help to reverse that great lie. Written by a Ukrainian nationalist and Holocaust survivor it recalls for posterity the fate of some of those Ukrainians who dared to fight for Ukraine's freedom."

Dr Mykhailo H Marunchak
Auschwitz tattoo number 120482

13

"Arbeit macht frei" - "Work shall set you free" by P Osynka from *Album of a Political Prisoner* from Stefan Petelycky, *Into Auschwitz, For Ukraine* (Kashtan Press, 2008)