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September 19, 2019

Rob Roberts
Editor in Chief
National Post
rroberts@npostmedia.com

Dear Mr. Roberts,

No, Canada does not and did not honour Nazi collaborators ("Canadian officials honour Nazi collaborators" National Post Sept. 17, 2019).

And no, the ceremony being referred to in that article was not a tribute to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) but rather the launching of the Memorial Park Project "Remember!Pamyatai!/Zachor!" in the old Jewish cemetery in Sambir Ukraine

The old Jewish cemetery of Sambir was the site, on the eve of Passover 1943, of a horrendous massacre by the Nazis of over 1,200 innocent Jewish children, women and men as part of the "Holocaust by Bullets," and was also the place of other Nazi executions of Jews and non-Jews. Starting in Soviet days, the mass grave itself has been neglected, vandalized and desecrated. The Memorial Park project is designed to correct this shameful situation and to provide a proper memorial for the victims of the Nazis in the Jewish cemetery, principally those buried in the mass grave. The project itself is sponsored by the Canadian non-profit Ukrainian Jewish Encounter (UJE) and hence the invitation to the Canadian Ambassador to attend the ceremony marking its inauguration.

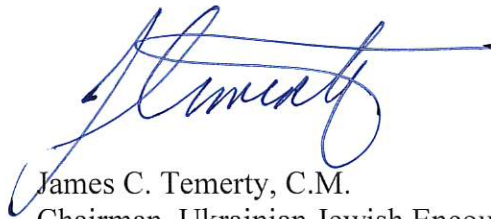
A key element to reaching an agreement with the local community was incorporation into the Memorial Park of some recognition of non-Jewish victims killed by the Nazis, notably 17 young Nationalists killed in early 1944 in a corner of the Jewish cemetery. The process of finding a means for such recognition that respected the sensibilities of all the communities involved and was consistent with both Christian customs and Jewish religious requirements for a kosher cemetery, was a difficult and sensitive one, that was accomplished through the direct participation and helpful

intervention of the leaders of Ukraine's major religious denominations. Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk of the Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine, Metropolitan Epiphaniy of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich, were present and spoke at the ceremony, as did Sambir Mayor Yuriy Hamar.

Far from honouring radical nationalism or a legacy of collaboration, the opening ceremony was devoted to precisely the opposite ideas. Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk explicitly declared that the Memorial Park project bore witness to the truth that radical nationalism is a dead end with no future and that the history of Ukraine necessarily includes the history of all peoples who have lived on its territory, and that meant that the history and suffering of the innocent Jewish people killed on the grounds of the cemetery is an integral part of Ukrainian history.

Rather than being angered by the ceremony in the old Jewish cemetery, the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities in Ukraine, has issued a statement supporting the Sambir Memorial Park Project (<http://vaadua.org/content/statement-coordination-council-vaad-ukraine-support-initiative-group-preserve-memory-sambir>).

The incomplete and unfair rendering of the situation on the front page of the September 17 edition of The National Post does a great disservice to what was a dignified ceremony marking an important step towards the completion of the Memorial Park project.



James C. Temerty, C.M.
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