

Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association

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MEDIA RELEASE

COMMEMORATING UKRAINIAN CANADIAN VICTORIA CROSS WINNER FILIP KONOWAL

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Spurred on by RON SOROBAY, first Vice-President of the UKRAINIAN CANADIAN PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATION of Ottawa, efforts have begun to properly commemorate the record of Canada's only Ukrainian Canadian VICTORIA CROSS winner, FILIP KONOWAL. In August 1917, near Lens, France, Corporal Konowal single-handedly destroyed two enemy machine guns and killed 16 German soldiers before being himself severely wounded. For his bravery he was promoted to sergeant and awarded the most prestigious medal of the British Empire. Ironically, while Konowal fought for Canada thousands of other Ukrainian Canadians were being unjustly imprisoned in concentration camps as "enemy aliens" during Canada's first national internment operations of 1914-1920.

Along with representatives of the EMBASSY OF UKRAINE, a wreath-laying ceremony took place at Konowal's gravesite in Ottawa's Notre Dame Cemetery, on 6 December, coinciding with Ukrainian Armed Forces Day. Earlier, members of Montreal's ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH #183 (Mazeppa Branch) and of Toronto's BRANCH #360 (Konowal Branch) began the process of negotiating with Canada's DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS to ensure that a proper monument, indicating Mr Konowal's distinction as a Victoria Cross winner, be placed at his grave. Following the intervention of the UKRAINIAN CANADIAN CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION it is expected that a government-funded marker will be prepared and installed by the late spring of 1996. Efforts are also underway to ensure that Konowal is properly identified as a Ukrainian in the records of the CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM, that a painting of him by Major Arthur Ambrose McEvoy is put on public display in the Parliament Buildings and that his actual Victoria Cross, thought to have been sold to a British collector, is placed on permanent exhibit. In a letter (8 December 1995) to DR LUBOMYR LUCIUK, from the secretary of the Victoria Cross and George Cross Association, Mrs D GRAHAME, MVO, it was noted that Konowal's medal is held by the Canadian War Museum.

Working with UCCLA, Branches #183 and #360 are also exploring the possibility of installing a trilingual bronze tablet in memory to Konowal at the Branch #360's headquarters on Queen Street West in Toronto.

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