



TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY News

Commemorating the Victims of Totalitarian Communism

Fall 2009

Tribute to Liberty is a Canadian organization whose mission is to establish a memorial to the victims of totalitarian communism in the National Capital Region, and to educate the public about Communism's crimes.

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Approved!

Most of you will already have heard the great news, but here it is again: the NCC has approved our proposal to build a memorial in Ottawa to victims of totalitarian communism. Thanks to media pressure, your support, and a top-notch team of negotiators, the NCC approved naming the memorial as proposed: “A Memorial to Victims of Totalitarian Communism.” At the NCC’s request, “Canada, a Land of Refuge” will be included as a subtitle for the monument to give the memorial its Canadian context. Getting this approval, as most of you are aware of through our updates and media coverage, was not easy.

At the NCC’s board meeting on September 10th the NCC approved “in principle” the proposal submitted by Tribute to Liberty and Founding Partner The Open Book Group to build the memorial. They requested, however, a reworking of the name to make it more “inclusive,” and, as one NCC board member put it, “politically correct.”

Tribute to Liberty sent out a press release immediately, and received excellent media coverage on the issue. The media pressure worked—the NCC quickly contacted us and Tribute to Liberty and The Open Book Group entered into a short series of negotiations with the NCC over the name. The result was victory!

Tribute to Liberty is now focusing on the next stages of the project—working with the NCC on land allocation, and fundraising.

Tribute to Liberty Marks the 20th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall with Prime Minister Stephen Harper

On November 9, 2009 Tribute to Liberty participated in the Government of Canada’s event commemorating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The event took place at the Government Conference Centre in Ottawa, where there is a large piece of the wall on display. Tribute to Liberty Board Chair Alide Forstmanis took part in a private wreath laying ceremony with The Right Honourable Stephen Harper and other dignitaries, at the piece of the wall. Following the wreath laying ceremony the Prime Minister gave a speech about the significance of the anniversary to an audience of over 150 people, gathered at the Conference Centre. Alide gave a speech on behalf of Tribute to Liberty and the memorial to victims of totalitarian communism to be built in Ottawa. Speeches were also given by the German Ambassador, Minister of Public Safety The Honourable Peter Van Loan, and President of the Canadian Polish Congress, Wladyslaw Lizon.

Below is the text of Alide’s speech, followed by excerpts of the Prime Minister’s speech. The full text of his speech can be found at: www.pm.gc.ca.

Alide Forstmanis’ Speech on the 20th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall:

I am here to speak on behalf of a very young Canadian organization, called Tribute to Liberty. I am Chair of its Board, and am honoured to be here with you today.

Tribute to Liberty’s goal is to build a monument to the victims of communism and to

educate the public about communism and its crimes. Many of you will have heard that we recently received approval from the National Capital Commission to build such a monument here in Ottawa. This was a significant step forward for us--one that many thought wouldn't happen, as memories of events like the fall of the Berlin Wall, fade further into the past.

The horror of communism is without precedent in the human condition, in scope and scale. An estimated 100 million people have been mercilessly eliminated in the name of an ideology. An ideology that sacrifices the freedom and dignity of the human person, for power and absolutism and the cult of the individual.



There are millions of Canadians who trace their roots to Central and Eastern European countries that suffered under communism, and millions more from other countries around the world that know the brutality of communist regimes. Today's anniversary is a testament to the human courage and perseverance of all who stood up to, and continue to make a stand against, the evil of communism. The fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago is symbolic of this victory over evil.

We must never forget courageous leaders like Lech Walesa, Pope John Paul the 2nd, Vaclav Havel, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Nor dissidents like Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Yelena Bonner and Vladimir Bukowsky, and all the unknown heroes who over many years and in many countries helped break the iron grip of communism.

Our memorial, when it is built, will commemorate the losses and hardships of all those who suffered under communism, and will pay tribute to Canada, this great country, which was and is a land of refuge for those who seek liberty.

There is an urgency to having this memorial built. Many of the victims of communism have passed away, and many are very elderly. It is important that as many as possible of these victims, especially those in Canada, see this memorial built. I know that there are some of these victims

here with us today. Although I won't recognize them individually, I want to acknowledge their attendance at this event.

Those who have suffered under communism, and those who are aware of its evil nature, all understand that the fight must continue - we must bring an end to the scourge that is communism in the world today. And we must teach our children that no such totalitarianism is ever justified - that every human person has an inviolable worth and dignity, and deserves liberty.

Excerpts from the Prime Minister's Speech on the 20th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall:

We are here today to commemorate and to celebrate the beginning of communism's end and the triumph of the principles of freedom and democracy.

In the lobby of this building, the Government Conference Centre, where talks relating to German reunification were held in 1990, there is a piece of the Berlin Wall.

The significance of this day is that the Wall of which this slab was once a part, could no longer contain the yearnings of a people demanding to be free.

Of course, it did not happen all at once. But, the point of no return was reached 20 years ago today, on November 9, 1989. That is when, with the world watching, thousands of Germans from the east poured across a border that would soon cease to exist.

They chose with their feet the principles long upheld by Canada and our allies: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

...This wall the Communists built was more than a physical division. It symbolized another, darker view of life. Beyond the wall, people lived in freedom, exercised democracy, experienced justice. On the Communist side, there was no freedom.

Individuals did not matter. Justice and law were only what best served the interests of the state. People belonged to the state, and served it. It was the difference between whether the people choose who governs them, or the government chooses the people - by choosing who will live and who will not. The difference between a system that is good, and a system that was evil.

We should acknowledge communism for what it was. Not a flawed or inefficient system but, like its totalitarian cousin fascism, the antithesis of our highest values. One of the two great twentieth-century threats to the very existence of our civilization. An evil to be understood, so that it may never again be repeated.

...Friends, the Berlin Wall divided a nation. But its fall united a continent in a hopeful future. Today we reflect with pride on the part Canada played in that downfall, and

we celebrate the triumph of ideas that liberate the human spirit over those that bound it in chains; the free and democratic ideals of Canada and its allies.

I am pleased to announce that this section of the Wall will be relocated to the Canadian War Museum, as an important relic of the Cold War. There, it will honour the men and women of the Canadian Forces who served during that confrontation. It will also complement the memorial to the Victims of Totalitarian Communism, planned for the capital region by Tribute to Liberty.



Alide, I want to congratulate you and your bipartisan group on getting this done. It shall stand as a reminder that all political systems are not the same, that our democracy and our freedoms are to be cherished, exercised and protected.

This is our history and our inheritance.

May God help us ensure that it will always be so.

Launch of Fundraising Campaign “Pathway to Liberty”

In October 2009 Tribute to Liberty launched their grassroots fundraising campaign, *The Pathway to Liberty*.

The campaign is designed to allow for donor recognition, as it is the policy of the National Capital Commission not to include donor recognition as part of the commemorative site.

The Pathway to Liberty is a virtual path on Tribute to Liberty’s web site. Each \$100 brick is the story of a victim of communism, or a message or dedication, contributed in the name of the donor or someone the donor wishes to honour. The donated bricks build the pathway that leads to liberty—and it is liberty that the memorial to victims of totalitarian communism represents.

For more information on the campaign or to donate please visit www.tributetoliberty.ca.

Advisory Council Meeting

Tribute to Liberty’s Advisory Council met on October 7th. Discussions centred around the recent NCC approval of the memorial, the next steps of the project, including land allocation, and fundraising, in particular, the launch of *The Pathway to Liberty*.

The Advisory Council is made up of representatives of the many different communities in Canada whose members trace their roots to countries affected by Communism. The Council plays an integral role in engaging these communities in support of the project, and in support of our longer term objective of educating Canadians about the historical record and what must be learned from it.

For more information about Tribute to Liberty’s Advisory Council please email info@tributetoliberty.ca.

Charles Coffey, O.C., Honorary Chair

Tribute to Liberty’s Honorary Chair, Charles Coffey, is a native of Woodstock, New Brunswick where he started his 44 year career with RBC Financial Group. He is the former executive vice president, government affairs and business development for RBC.

Mr. Coffey’s involvement in private, public and not-for-profit sectors has resulted in special honours such as the Order of Canada, the Award of Distinction from the Public Affairs Association of Canada, and the Humanitarian Award for Community Service from Yorktown Family Services. He has served for several years as Chair of the National Advisory Council for the Museum of Human Rights.

North Korea Human Rights Forum

Tribute to Liberty Board Chair Alide Forstmanis took part in the North Korea Human Rights Forum, *Open the Borders & Close the Gulags*, organized by the Council for Human Rights in North Korea, in Toronto, September 4th and 5th. Tribute to Liberty hosted the evening reception where witness experiences of the crimes of Communism were shared and read.

History Unhidden Katyn Massacre

In 1989 a book entitled *List of Victims and Lost - Katyn* was published by ALFA Publishing in Warsaw. Other than a bit of an overview and some maps, the rest of the book, pages 20 to 362, lists names and identification of some of

the approximately 15,000 Polish officers murdered by the Soviets in 1940 in the Katyn Forest, near Smolensk, Russia.

These are the names of those who were officially identified at the Kozielsk, Ostaszkow, and Starobielsk camps where Polish prisoners-of-war, mostly officers and intellectuals, were taken by the Soviets in 1940. On page 178 the second last name from the bottom of the page is "Wojcieszonek, Edward," my uncle (my mother's younger brother).



In the book I also have the small card, yellowed with age, that my grandmother received from the "Missing Persons Inquiry Office" in 1946. She was at the time in a displaced person's camp in Rusape, Southern Rhodesia. She'd been sent there after escaping with other prisoners-of-war from the work camps in Soviet Russia where she, my mother and brother had been sent in 1942. The card simply says "Edward Wojcieszonek, Ensign, born 1914, appears in the evidentiary as died in Kozielsk."

A little over two weeks after the Nazi German army invaded Poland in 1939, the Soviet Union invaded from the east thereby breaking its Non-Aggression Pact with Poland. On March 5, 1940 the Soviets started to deport one and a half million Poles to Siberia, to the Gulags, a land of misery, degradation, and death.

An unthinkable fate awaited the 15,000 Polish prisoners-of-war who were interred at the three camps near Smolensk, Russia. Few were ever seen again and in the spring of 1943 mass graves were found by the Germans. These graves contained the bodies of thousands of officers, each killed by a shot to the back of the head. The Soviets blamed the Germans for the crime.

When Russia joined the Allied forces against Germany, they agreed to release all non-German military and civilian prisoners. A new Polish Army under General Anders arose within Soviet Russia, consisting of former prisoners. The Polish Government in Exile in England was concerned about the whereabouts of the soldiers and officers taken by the Soviets, as many were not reporting to General Anders for duty. Both Stalin and Beria asserted that all had been released from the camps and would be reporting for duty "at any time." Concerned about the men, General Anders personally handed Stalin a list of 4,518 people who had already been identified from some of the mass graves at

Katyn. However, the list was about 10,000 men short, and the Soviets continued to deny their complicity.

In July 1952, a Select Committee established by the U.S. House of Representatives to conduct a full and complete investigation of the massacre filed the following report: "The committee unanimously finds, beyond any question of reasonable doubt, that the Soviet NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) committed the mass murders of the Polish officers and intellectual leaders in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk, Russia."

Many books and articles have been written about these murders. Today, there is a shrine at the spot where the greatest number of bodies was found. The Katyn Madonna cradling in her arms a soldier whose bullet hole to the back of the head is very visible is part of this shrine.

Despite all the evidence, the Soviet Union was most reluctant to accept the blame for the murders. It is only of late that in some small measure the Russian Government has admitted to the "NKVD" involvement, which is still a way of taking some of the blame from themselves.

For many years the Katyn Massacre was kept secret, and even today in history books it is an "unmentioned" event.



Submitted by Tribute to Liberty Board Member Teresa Berezowski.

A Quote to Remember

We who live in free market societies believe that growth, prosperity and ultimately human fulfillment, are created from the bottom up, not the government down. Only when the human spirit is allowed to invent and create, only when individuals are given a personal stake in deciding economic policies and benefiting from their success—only then can societies remain economically alive, dynamic, progressive, and free. Trust the people. This is the one irrefutable lesson of the entire postwar period contradicting the notion that rigid government controls are essential to economic development.

-Ronald Reagan, September 29, 1981