



TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY

News

Commemorating the Victims of Totalitarian Communism

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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.

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Tribute to Liberty News is published four times a year. If you would like to add an email address to our subscriber list please email info@tributetoliberty.ca.

For more information about Tribute to Liberty visit: www.tributetoliberty.ca



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The Memorial to Victims of Communism Needs Your Support

On behalf of the board of Tribute to Liberty, I ask that if you are planning to donate to the *Memorial to Victims of Totalitarian Communism* to do so now. In order to undertake the next steps necessary for building the memorial we need your donation.

Now that land has been allocated, the next step is to hold a national design competition to choose a design for the memorial. This next step requires significant funding. The NCC requires that two-thirds of the cost of the memorial be in place before the competition begins. Two-thirds of the cost of constructing the memorial is approximately \$600,000.

Tribute to Liberty's fundraising goal is 1.5 million. This amount covers the total cost of the project, including all expenses, from operational expenses to the materials for the memorial, landscaping of the site, and so on. The bulk of the budget goes toward the cost of materials and construction of the memorial and running a design competition. Approximately one-fifth of the budget goes toward the operational expenses of running the project (administration, publicity, events, fundraising, etc.).

Our very ambitious two main timeline goals for the project are a design competition in the first half of 2011, and unveiling of the finished memorial by 2012. Fundraising is obviously the key to meeting these goals.

We introduced a grassroots, online fundraising campaign called the *Pathway to Liberty* in October 2009. The *Pathway* is a virtual buy-a-brick campaign. The NCC's policy stipulates that donors cannot be recognized at the memorial site. Our *Pathway* campaign allows for donors to the memorial to be recognized and for donors to tell a story of a victim of Communism, or include a message or dedication with each \$100 brick donated.

The *Memorial to Victims of Totalitarian Communism* will serve as a public reminder of the millions of forgotten victims of Communism, and will finally bring the suffering of these victims into the public's consciousness—but this will not happen without donations from those who support the idea of this memorial. Please donate now to make this memorial a reality. The last page of this newsletter contains details on how to donate.

Alide Forstmanis
Chair of the Board
Tribute to Liberty



Romanian Association of Canada Raises Funds for the Memorial

The Romanian Association of Canada (ARC) dedicated its annual picnic on Saturday, October 9th to raising funds for the *Memorial to Victims of Totalitarian Communism*. The event, at Val-David, QC, was attended by the Romanian Ambassador to Canada, Mrs. Elena Stefoi; Tribute to Liberty Board Chair, Mrs. Alide Forstmanis; ARC Vice-President, Mr. Peter Cotnareanu; former political prisoner Mr. George Sarry; Pages Romanian editor Mr. George Sava; as well as local municipal officials, members of the Romanian Canadian community, and media.

Mrs. Forstmanis made a speech at the event, emphasizing the need for the memorial. She also spoke one-on-one with the Ambassador about the importance of the project. The Ambassador expressed her support for the memorial in her own remarks to the audience.

Many of the donations from October 9th included dedications and messages, which are now online on the *Pathway to Liberty*. Visit www.tributetoliberty.ca to read them. The story of political prisoner George Sarry is also included in this issue of *Tribute to Liberty News*.

Tribute to Liberty is grateful for the support of ARC, George Sava and the Romanian community. When Tribute to Liberty was first launched in September 2008, one of the first calls of support the organization received was from George Sava. Mr. Sava immediately followed up with a donation, and continues to support the project today.



Mrs. Alide Forstmanis with Mr. and Mrs. George Sarry.

Tribute to Liberty Participates in the Free Thinking Film Festival

The first annual Free Thinking Film Festival took place in Ottawa, November 12th – 14th. Tribute to Liberty participated in the three day festival; Tribute to Liberty Board Chair Alide Forstmanis was on hand to discuss the memorial project with festival goers.

Films such as *Katyn* and *The Lives of Others* were screened at the festival, organized by the Free Thinking Film Society. The Society hosted last spring's Ottawa screening of *The Soviet Story*, which Tribute to Liberty helped sponsor.



Mrs. Alide Forstmanis speaks with a festival goer about the memorial project.

History Unhidden: Life of Romanian-Canadian George Sarry

My father, George Sarry, was born in Constanta Romania on January 8, 1928. His mother was British and a widow from World War I, while his father was Romanian of Greek origin and a member of one of Constanta's more prominent families. The youngest son in a family of eight children, my father's older siblings were born in England. The Sarry's immigrated to Constanta in 1927 on the Orient Express railway.

George Sarry grew up during World War II and vividly describes the hardships and horrors he witnessed. Tragically, his freedom and youth were abruptly taken away by the Communist regime in post-war Romania.

My father's ordeal began on November 19, 1949, when, at the age of 21, he was kidnapped in broad daylight while on his way to work as a messenger for the British Consulate in Constanta. For the next eleven years, he was unable to see, or talk or correspond with anyone from his family or the outside world.

During the first four weeks of his captivity, George Sarry was repeatedly beaten to the point of unconsciousness in an attempt to get a confession from him. In March 1950, he was convicted of high treason by a military court and sentenced to fifteen years of forced labour. George Sarry was among the youngest of the political prisoners and definitely *did not fit the mould*. Most of the prisoners were either doctors, journalists, lawyers or politicians – i.e. members of Romania's intellectual elite.

While in the prisons of Aiud, Jilava Oradea, Pitesti and Baia Sprie Cavnice mine, my father became proficient in sending Morse code messages to other prisoners through the prison's radiator pipe system. For this, as well as other prohibited acts, he was, all too often, punished with seven to ten days of solitary confinement in a dark, wet and cold basement cell.

In 1953, George Sarry was an active member of an escape plan. Although he ultimately declined to participate, realizing that his recapture would be inevitable, his involvement was revealed in the confession of another prisoner and his sentence was subsequently extended by eight years.

Later that year, while in the Oradea prison, my father used a wire from a broken mattress to write on the wall of his cell "UNABLE TO STAND THIS 'EXTERMINATION REGIME'," and attempted to commit suicide.

Within five years, this strong 1.75 metre-tall young man was reduced to a meagre forty-three kilos. In a desperate attempt to bring about better prison conditions he and other political prisoners embarked on a hunger strike to which the cruel Communist captors responded by force-feeding them, further dampening the prisoners' spirits.

In Baia Sprie's Cavnice lead mines my father became somewhat of a legend among the prisoners. He created what became known as the "Sarry Method" of ore extraction, which tricked the prison mine authorities into believing that their unattainable quotas for lead extraction were being met. The resulting less strenuous workload enabled many of the physically weaker prisoners to survive.

In 1960, a prisoner exchange between England and Romania resulted in George Sarry being released earlier than expected. However, he was required to remain in Romania for several weeks to allow swelling and other signs of malnutrition to diminish. Upon his arrival in England, he was reunited with his mother, two sisters and three brothers. His brother Costica, who had been living in Montreal for several years, encouraged him to immigrate

to Canada, which he did in the fall of 1961.

In Canada, his life began anew. In 1963, he married my mother, Esther Morin, fifteen years his junior, and from a traditional French-Canadian family of thirteen children. Despite being plagued with various health-related issues caused by his eleven years of harsh imprisonment, he has lived a fulfilling life in Canada. George Sarry now lives in Dorval, Quebec where he is surrounded by his wife, two daughters and their husbands and his three granddaughters.

My father has written his memoirs as a legacy for his granddaughters. His book embraces the values of freedom and democracy that we, too often, take for granted in our wonderful country of Canada.

George Sarry's book, *George Sarry: My Life, Memories from Prison and Freedom*, will be published in English and French in 2011.

Submitted by: Kathy Sarry



George Sarry's book in Romanian.

Resource Spotlight

Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Live in North Korea
Barbara Demick
Spiegel & Grau, 2009

Journalist Barbara Demick explores the everyday lives of citizens in Communist North Korea. For more information visit the book's website:
www.nothingtoenvy.com

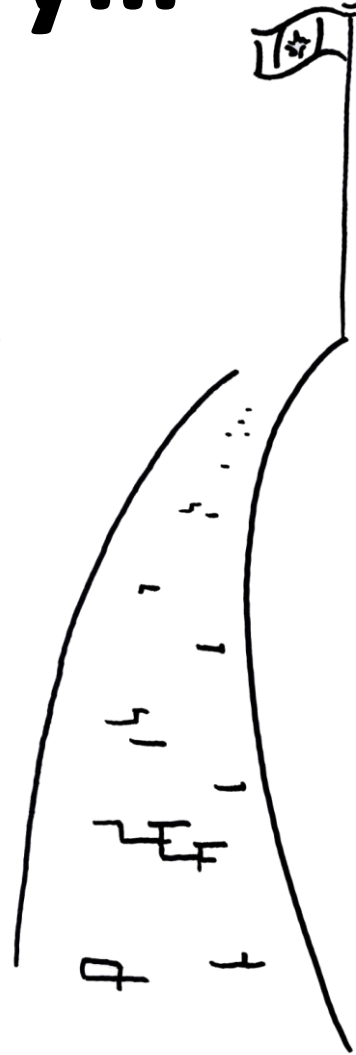
Tell Your Story...

And help build the Memorial to Victims of Communism in Ottawa.

A donation of \$100 buys a brick for the virtual Pathway to Liberty that leads to the Memorial.

Each brick can be donated with a story of a victim of Communism, a message or a dedication. Donate today at: tributetoliberty.ca.

For more information about Tribute to Liberty and the Memorial to Victims of Communism, visit tributetoliberty.ca.



Mail-in Contribution Form

**Don't forget to enclose your story,
message or dedication!**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Donation Amount: \$1000 _____ \$500 _____ \$100 _____ Other _____ **I wish to remain anonymous:** _____

Please make cheque payable to Tribute to Liberty and mail to:
Tribute to Liberty, P.O. Box 84558, 2336 Bloor St. West, Toronto, ON M6S 4Z7

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