



TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY

News

Commemorating the Victims of Communism

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Tribute to Liberty is a Canadian organization whose mission is to establish a memorial to the victims of Communism in the National Capital Region.

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



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Why a Memorial? Why in Canada?

The memorial to victims of Communism will serve as a public reminder of the millions of forgotten victims of Communism, and will bring the suffering of these victims into the public's consciousness. Memorials are essential parts of the landscape, and help make known history so that it is not forgotten.

In Canada, over 8 million people trace their roots to countries that suffered under Communism. Since the beginning of the first Communist regime in 1917, immigrants from Communist countries have flocked to Canada in search of freedom and safety. For example, in 1948 when the Communist state of Czechoslovakia was officially established, thousands of Czechs fled their homeland, some leaving spouses, families, and businesses behind. From 1948-1952, over 10,000 Czechoslovaks immigrated to Canada. During the late 1970's, Canada admitted nearly 70,000 refugees from Communist-ruled Vietnam. These people were dubbed "Vietnamese boat people" because of their willingness to flee their country and take to the ocean in tiny, leaky, unsafe boats. When Russians were fleeing their country after the Bolsheviks took power in 1917, Canada had no precedent for the mass relief of political refugees and at first refused them. However, after the persistent petitioning of various charitable groups and individuals on behalf of the refugees, exceptions were made, and many Russian families escaping the immediate results of Bolshevism immigrated to Canada.

Other examples of Canadian immigrants who fled Communist regimes in their homelands include:

- 20,000 Russian Mennonites facing persecution in Communist Russia settled in Canada between 1923 and 1929
- 14,000 Estonians immigrated to Canada between 1946 and 1955, escaping Communism in their homeland
- 34,000 Ukrainians came to Canada after World War II as DPs (displaced persons), not wanting to return to the repression they faced in the Soviet Union
- 13,000 Latvians came to Canada following Latvia's entrance into the Soviet Union after World War II
- 37,000 Hungarians left Hungary after the Hungarian uprising and settled in Canada in between 1957 and 1958
- 95,000 Poles came to Canada following the crushing of the solidarity movement against Communism in Poland

For all these victims and many, many others, Canada represented—and continues to represent—peace, order and good government, and above all liberty.

Donate Now!

This memorial needs to be built. The untold victims of Communism (many of whom lie in mass graves or unmarked graves) must be recognized. To make a donation to the memorial visit www.tributetoliberty.ca or use the mail-in form on the last page of this newsletter. Help us build this memorial by donating today. Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$20. Thank you for your support!

Tribute to Liberty Speaks at Romanian-Canadian Day

Tribute to Liberty participated in Romanian-Canadian Day on June 9th at Kitchener City Hall. Tribute to Liberty Board Chair Alide Forstmanis gave a speech about Tribute to Liberty and gave out information about the memorial. The day-long celebration of Romanian culture was an excellent opportunity for Tribute to Liberty to reach out to the Romanian community in Canada. Tribute to Liberty values and appreciates the Romanian-Canadian community's support.

Mrs. Forstmanis was also interviewed about the memorial project by *Ziarul Impact din Montreal*, a bimonthly Romanian-Canadian newspaper.



Tribute to Liberty Participates in Slovak Day

Tribute to Liberty Board Chair Alide Forstmanis continued with community outreach at Slovak Day in Milton on July 15th. Organized by the 1st District Assembly of the Canadian Slovak League, the event was a wonderful celebration of Slovak culture and tradition. Mrs. Forstmanis spent the day handing out information about Tribute to Liberty and speaking to people about the memorial project—including one woman who herself was a victims of Communism. Mrs. Forstmanis was interviewed by OMNI TV at the event.

In recent months, the Slovak community newspaper *Kanadsky Slovak* has printed articles about Tribute to Liberty to assist with fundraising for the memorial. Tribute to Liberty appreciates the support of this community.

Media Outreach Highlights

Tribute to Liberty does not have staff nor does it engage any consultants at this stage of the project. However,

community outreach and media outreach continues. In July, Tribute to Liberty Board Chair Alide Forstmanis was interviewed by the *Ottawa Citizen* for an article about the memorial. Later in the month, Mrs. Forstmanis was invited to appear on the Charles Adler show on Sun News Network to speak about the memorial project. Earlier in the summer, an article in *The Huffington Post* included information on Tribute to Liberty.

Supportive communities continue to publish information about Tribute to Liberty in their online and print publications.

History Unhidden

The Story of My Mother

My mother, Julia Siomkajlo Szypowska, was forcibly deported by the Soviets on February 10, 1940, from Eastern Poland to the northern regions of Kazakhstan, on the very border of Siberia. My mother and her family were awoken in the middle of the night and given less than an hour to be ready to leave their home and all their belongings. She was deported along with her elderly parents (Jan and Michalina) and siblings (Jozef, Aniela, Amalia, Michalina, Joanna, Stanislaw), and approximately 2 million Poles. She was deported just because she was Polish, and for no other reason.

For weeks they were locked into an unheated cattle car in the dead of winter, with temperatures falling as low as minus 40 degrees, as the train brought them deeper into the depths of the USSR.

She and her siblings became slave labourers in a gold mine for almost 2 years. They had to work on all fours, for 12 hours a day, with only hand tools to assist them, and they were not even made to clear the mine when explosives were set off. The rocks rained down on them whenever this happened, and many were buried alive. They were given no medical aid, no clothing or supplies, and only a slice of bread per day; and this was based on whether or not they met their quotas in the mines.

Five members of my mother's family remain in unmarked graves in the USSR. Helpless to do anything about it, she witnessed the deaths of her parents from starvation, malnutrition, and Typhoid fever, as well as the deaths of a brother, sister, and sister-in-law.

When they were finally released, she and three remaining sisters had another harrowing journey ahead of them. With few provisions, they journeyed until they reached the Polish Army that was forming in southern USSR, and eventually made it to freedom in Persia. After regaining some of their strength they made a further journey to Kidugala, a refugee camp in Tanzania, East Africa.

A year later, my Mother made another incredible journey. This time she traveled on a troop ship from East Africa to

England, at a time when ships were regularly being torpedoed and sunk.



In England, she joined the Polish Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and served out the rest of the war working in aircraft maintenance. By this time, Poland was swallowed up in the Communist axis, so she no longer had a country to return to.

After meeting and marrying Michal, they set off on another incredible journey, this time to a new life in Canada. They spent the first 22 years in Montreal where they raised their children and rebuilt their lives. In 1971, Julia and Michal moved to Kingston, Ontario, where they lived for 36 years.

In her final years, Julia suffered from Alzheimer's and while she steadily forgot the more recent moments of her life, the horrible memories of the past came flooding back. So in her last years she suffered once more the pain and indignity of life as a slave labourer in the USSR, and she re-lived the deaths of her parents and siblings in those inhuman conditions. She died on September 7, 2007, in the arms of her husband and children. She will be forever remembered and forever loved by her children and grandchildren.

Submitted by Krystyna Szypowska

History Unhidden

Remembering Inhumanity by Humans

Humans seem to be the only mammals that regularly and indiscriminately torture and kill their own species, often for no better reason than that the "others" do not fit into a perceived correct mindset. So it was in the former Soviet Union after the revolution. The target for the killing was the leadership and educated individuals, but to get these

there was indiscriminant destruction and many others died as well.

My father's family was not in the group that was being targeted, being farmers and not owning their own land. The revolution itself already took a large toll as the two sides went back and forth through the village, always accusing the residents of favouring the other side, and "punishing" the perceived offenders—that was normally a death punishment. However, after the revolution was over and Stalin came into power, there was a deliberate practice of demanding all the produce of the farm(s) and that included (especially) the horses. Stalin knew that if he asked for all the grain farmers might still keep some to plant the next year, but if he took away all the horses it would be very hard to sow crops. He wanted to starve the population—and did it very effectively.

After a while there were so many deaths that regular tours of the community had to be made to collect the dead and count how many had died. This had to be done by those who were still alive—my uncle was one of those assigned to that duty. In addition to the starvation, diseases set in, thus increasing the death rate significantly. Many of my ancestral relatives were among those who did not survive, including aunts, uncles and my grandfather.



The details of the stories are often gruesome and do not need to be retold. What is needed is to find a way to ENSURE that these atrocities are known by future generations. Hopefully it will make it possible to convince future generations, far removed from the violence of Communism, that all philosophies which demand the literal "killing off" of any segments of the population should never be allowed to gain momentum. The Tribute to Liberty monument can be a big part of ensuring this message is clearly taken into the future and never forgotten. It is for this reason that I support this most important project and hope that many others will as well.

Submitted by Walter Friesen

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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