



# MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM

TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY



## Newsletter

Summer 2020 Volume 12, Issue 3

### Project Update

Progress on the construction of the memorial continues with slight delays—especially due to COVID-19.

Final construction drawings including the electrical design have been prepared by consultants and have been issued for construction to the National Capital Commission (NCC). As soon as final construction planning is complete, construction of the Memorial Plinth and Wall of Remembrance will begin—this is expected to happen in the coming weeks.

As mentioned in an earlier Newsletter, fabrication of the bronze sculpture has been delayed due to COVID-19. The sculpture will be fabricated over the winter months and installed at the Memorial site in the Spring of 2021 with an unveiling to follow.

Meanwhile, on Canada Day the sign for the Memorial at the construction site was vandalized. The phrase ‘communism will win’ was spray-painted on the sign along with several hammers and sickles. Tribute to Liberty Chair Ludwik Klimkowski called the act of vandalism a disgrace and an insult to the memory of our heroes.



Vandalism at the Memorial site.



Construction is progressing.

Tribute to Liberty is a Canadian organization whose mission is to establish a memorial to the victims of Communism in the National Capital Region. Tribute to Liberty's Newsletter is published four times a year. If you would like to add an email address to our subscriber list please email [info@tributetoliberty.ca](mailto:info@tributetoliberty.ca).

Mailing Address: 629 Mill Park Drive, Kitchener, ON, N2P 1V4

[www.tributetoliberty.ca](http://www.tributetoliberty.ca)

Charitable #: 814999660RR0001

# Why I Support the Tribute to Liberty Memorial to the Victims of Communism

By Oksana Bashuk Hepburn

After World War II ended, horror reigned along some fifty kilometers of the Curzon Line which established the new border between Poland and the USSR. Both Communist governments forcefully removed some 1.5 million inhabitants from their ancestral lands “to the kolhosp” in the Ukrainian SSR or to the formerly German lands around the North Sea.

Archival records show that my mother’s family—generations of Ukrainian Catholic priests, school directors and teachers—lived in Tenetytska and surrounding areas close to the new frontier since the early 1800s. In the months of terror in 1945-46 my mother, Natalia Leontovych Bashuk, witnessed village after village disappear.



Mama writes about this cataclysm in “The Border: Memoir From No Man’s Land” under her nom de plumb, Nata Lenko, to protect the innocent when day-to-day existence was riddled with beatings, looting, confiscation of food supplies, starvation, killings, and flight to only-god-knows-where. Thousands upon thousands of humans were herded—“move or we shoot”—into cattle trains to parts unknown. Ukraine lost some 14 million people during the 1940s because, as Timothy Snyder tells us, WWII, and the aftermath, was about possessing the territory of Ukraine; it’s the real estate!

The ethnic cleansing—culminating in the historic Aktsija Visla—had two objectives: to smoke out resistance to the Communist regime and resettle the territory with supporters of Russification. It happened

in the Baltic states and elsewhere and continues today in Ukraine’s Crimea and Donbas.

Mama writes about the heroic efforts of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA)—the resistance—to protect its people. But history was not on its side. Until Ukraine’s independence, in 1991, the Kremlin’s Communist dictators ruled. They decided everything, including how many more Ukrainian patriots could be forcefully removed or incarcerated to meet the slave labour quota required for building the Communist utopia throughout the vast USSR.

To cover up crimes like ethnic cleansing the dispossessed were labeled “enemies of the people, terrorists, bandits, traitors and Nazis.” We hear the same slurs against Russia’s critics today!

In the Memoir she writes about her sister Irena, a schoolteacher, incarcerated by the NKVD for her husband’s resistance to the atrocities. The Soviets shot him and she was sentenced to 15 years building roads in Kazakhstan. Their infant, Zorjana, was spared the harsh life of a state orphanage for the children of “enemies,” where countless thousands had their names changed and were “re-educated” to hate their parents, their country, and their God. Kind family friends brought her up.

After her mother’s release their harsh life continued. Irena was forbidden to hold employment or live close to relatives or friends. Zorjana was barred from attending university. They were destitute except for the help sent from family in Poland and Canada.

My grandparents and youngest daughter Kalyna were “voluntarily” removed to the Gdansk area of Poland. Our fate—mama’s and mine—was different.



During the Nazi occupation of Ukraine, my parents were incarcerated for resisting the German occupation. I, a baby, was cared for by my Leontovych grandparents. After her release, mama lived with us. On a mission for UPA, she and I broke miraculously through the Iron Curtin border. Dr. Ivan Leontovych—my great uncle—assisted with our crossing into the West and in housing us in Prague.

He had fled Ukraine earlier to escape the hunt for Ukrainian patriots. In Prague, he completed a doctorate in law and worked in the Czech parliament. It was in his home that we reunited with my father, Petro Bashuk. He was incarcerated in Auschwitz for nearly two years.

After the Communist takeover in 1952, my great-uncle was imprisoned. He spent two years there for assisting Ukrainian refugees, like us. A life-long banishment from professional employment followed.

I am deeply indebted to all who helped us escape the Communist hell. It led to my becoming a Canadian. I am free but I have a duty: to warn against the dangers of dictatorships. The Nazi menace is dead but too often resurrected as a divergence by today's—even worst offender—Russia's President Vladimir Putin. The Communist/USSR/KGB-inspired aggressor still sews the same fake seductions of peace and co-operation started by Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and company, while killing, lying and creating world-wide chaos.

The eight million Canadians, descendants of those who escaped Russia-led Communist atrocities worldwide—Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, Korea, Rwanda, Venezuela, Latin America, the countries of Eastern and Central Europe—all share this duty.

That is why the Tribute to Liberty Memorial to the Victims of Communism is so important. It is a commitment to freedom, and a counter to Kremlin-inspired Communism that killed some 120 million world-wide and continues to wage military, cyber and word warfare on those who insist on liberty.

*Oksana Bashuk Hepburn, former executive with the Government of Canada and President of U\*CAN Ukraine Canada Relations Inc., a consulting firm brokering interests between the two countries, is an opinion writer published in The Hill Times, Ottawa Citizen, National Post, Winnipeg Free Press, Kyiv Post and other publications. She has defended the Tribute to Liberty memorial against detractors in Canada's media.*

*The memoir Na Mezhovij Zemli: Spomyny z Zakerzonnja was published in Kyiv in 1995; the Polish translation in Krakow, 2019. The Ukrainian version will be republished next year along with the English translation.*

## **History Unhidden An Armenian Story**

My father, Misak Seferian, wrote: "We fight against the Bolsheviks because they confiscate everything we have and strip us of our means of living. They govern our fatherland with foreign soldiers. We fight them because they pursue us without reason. The Bolsheviks fill their prisons with our people, and subject us to unspeakable torture. They deny us any rights. We fight for our freedom and our honor."

Misak Seferian was imprisoned and tortured by the Bolsheviks in 1921. He was transferred from the Tiflis, Georgia Bolshevik prison to the Alexandropol, Armenia Bolshevik Prison. He wrote in his diary as events were taking place in both prisons. Fortunately, he was able to escape with his knapsack containing his diaries. My grandfather, Apel Seferian, believing his only surviving son was also dead, fled to Istanbul, Turkey, leaving to come to Canada in 1921. My father, Misak Seferian, came to Canada in 1923. The following are excerpts from his writing.

### **Talin, Armenia, 1921**

After breakfast, we took the cows and oxen to the garden and left them to graze. In an adjoining garden, a man with a white beard finished watering and came over to us.

The neighbor glumly shook his head and said, "It was only a few months ago that those Bolsheviks signed thousands of pieces of paper with our superiors. They took control of our country, and just a few hours later, forgot all their written promises. Over the last two months, eleven to twelve youths have been taken away from just this one village alone and none have returned."

"And what were the sins of those who were taken away?" I asked.

"While arguing with someone, one of them suddenly uttered an anti-party word. Another had served his country. They took our boys away without any

questioning. They sent them to Siberia's ice storms, or threw them into dark and putrid jail cells. They will all die for the general sin of being anti-Bolshevik."

### **Tiflis, Georgia, Bolshevik Prison, 1921**

The door had barely opened when we heard flogging and screaming, followed by footsteps of men running this way and that. They shot the first group of men in the adjacent cell. And rising out through those sounds of terror and brutality, there were the sounds of gunshots. I did not sleep at all that night. I sat behind the door, listening with horror to the heart-rending cries of those being taken out of the cells and then executed in front of the jail.

Our cell was the closest to the front wall and the entire coming and going took place there. Our hearts leaped with terror every time we heard the thud of heavy boots, and being close to the outside door, we clearly heard the lamentations of those outside. That night was the last night that I remained in that slaughterhouse of Tiflis called a jail.

### **Alexandropol (Gyumri) Armenia, Bolshevik Prison**

Pulling a whip out from the front of his long-necked boot, the functionary flogged me viciously. I threw myself down and shoved my head under the table in an effort to defend myself from his fury. When the other functionary saw that my head was close to him, he moved his chair back and viciously kicked my head with the toe of his boot. Two more strikes and I lost consciousness.



When I came to, I was in a dark place. I slowly remembered how they had taken me to the office and then beaten me. I tried to get up but could not; my head throbbed, and I toppled down. I remained there for quite a while and then tried to get up again. I found the wall, and leaning against it, I slid across the length and width of the room. I realized that I was in a

very small, humid cell with no window and a dirt floor. I found the door and sat in front of it. There was a very painful, open wound on my head. My hair was sticky with blood, and my shirt was stuck to my back with my blood. My entire body was throbbing with pain. I heard the sound of heavy boots. Someone was standing in front of the door.



The keyhole was my only way of relating with the outside world. I knew from that keyhole when it was daylight. Hours that seemed to stretch out as long as days somehow passed. In the afternoon, I noticed a guard frequently walking in front of my cell. I pounded on the door.

"What do you want?" shouted the guard.

"It has been two days since you have given me water or bread. I beg you; give me a little water," I cried.

He soon returned to give me two pieces of bread. He then quickly left and locked the door. I sat behind the door and tried to eat the bread, but when I bit down, it felt as though my brain would leap out of the open wound in my head.

The key entered the lock. On the threshold, stood the jail official. I followed him as he led me to a small room. As soon as I went in, he locked the door and then left. There was a strange, sour odor. Hardly fifteen to twenty minutes passed when I felt my head getting heavy and an unusual weakening of my body. I knew instantly that the Reds were repeating the same chemical treachery they had done to me in Tiflis.

The metal bars on the windows were impossible to break. The door was solid and locked. An idea suddenly came to me. I quickly fell to my knees at the door, closed my mouth, and firmly pressed my nose to the keyhole. With my nostrils wide open, I breathed only the air outside the room for almost an entire hour. When I heard footsteps approaching the door,

I pulled back.

The door opened, and the jail official and a soldier stood on the threshold. He led me to a small room and pointed to a chair for me to sit on. He went out, leaving the soldier standing at the door holding a bayonet. This is where I will live the last moments of my life, I thought.

Two officials soon came in, holding thick notebooks in their hands. "It is our duty to first question you and write your answers in our notebooks," said the senior official.

"I refuse to answer any questions."

When he heard this, he leaped up, took a ruler from the desk, and s The book, by Andrew Kavchak, is "The Katyn Forest Massacre: An Annotated Bibliography of Books in English" truck me twice on the face so hard that the ruler shattered to pieces. He then threw me wildly down off the chair, and taking me under his feet, he then furiously booted me. Finally, he put his boot on my neck and pressed down with all his strength. I could barely breathe; my eyes felt as if they would fall out. Blood flowed from my nose. Lifting me by the arms, they dragged me out.

Finally, those few terrible hours, each one seeming as long as days, passed. I was standing behind the door when I heard footsteps approaching. A key entered the lock. A chill passed through my body as I remembered the similar sound of the key in the Tiflis jail during the night hours. The door opened, and on the threshold stood the senior official and two soldiers with bayonets.

*Submitted by Pearl Seferian.*

## **Resource Spotlight**

### **Museums of Communism**

Lonsky Prison National Museum  
Lviv  
<http://www.lonckoho.lviv.ua/>

The Ukrainian Museum  
New York  
<http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org>

The Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum  
Addis Ababa

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-red-terror-martyrs-memorial-museum-addis-ababa-ethiopia>

The Killing Fields Museum of Cambodia  
Seattle  
<http://www.killingfieldsmuseum.com/cambodia.html>

Another list of memorials and museums dealing with Communism can be found here:  
<https://communistcrimes.org/en/museums-and-memorials>

## **Resource Spotlight**

### **The Katyn Forest Massacre: An Annotated Bibliography of Books in English**

In April 1940 the NKVD massacred nearly 22,000 Polish citizens and buried them in mass graves in what became known as the Katyn Massacre.

A new book by Andrew Kavchak, "The Katyn Forest Massacre: An Annotated Bibliography of Books in English," provides a history of the tragedy and a discussion of the 38 books about it that have appeared in English over the decades since the war.

Kavchak's grandfather was among the Polish Officers who were killed in the Katyn Massacre. Kavchak lives in Ottawa, Ontario.

The book is available on Amazon.

