



Winning Design Chosen for Victims of Communism Memorial

On December 11, the Honourable Shelly Glover, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, and the Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism announced the winning design for the National Memorial to the Victims of Communism is the design submitted by ABSTRAKT Studio Architecture of Toronto.

“We are one step closer to building this significant National Memorial to Victims of Communism,” said Minister Glover at the announcement on Parliament Hill. “Congratulations to ABSTRAKT Studio Architecture on presenting a moving and thought-provoking design. This new landmark in the National Capital will become a solemn place to reflect on the impact of communism and on the meaning of oppression and freedom.”

The submission by ABSTRAKT was selected from among six finalists who were invited to present their design concepts to a jury of professionals and to the public as part of a national design competition.

The winning team, composed of Voytek Gorczynski, Architect, OAA, Janusz Kapusta, Artist, and Andrzej Pawlik, Architect, depicts a “fold of memory” with over a hundred million singular pixel-like “memory squares” covering the exterior face of the folds. Each represents an individual victim.

Ludwik Klimkowski, Chair of the Board of Tribute to Liberty, spoke at the announcement: “On behalf of the Board of directors of Tribute to Liberty, I would like to express our deep gratitude and thanks to Minister Glover for her unwavering support and tireless work for the Memorial to the Victims of Communism. To my fellow jurors: many thanks for your work and truly inspiring conversations. And last, but not least, to the winning team ABSTRAKT

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.

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Studio Architecture of Toronto: please accept our sincere congratulations. Your vision and message will not only make this memorial a place of national commemorations, but it will also ignite and establish a truly unique, Canadian ground, including the Wall of Remembrance, for all involved communities to visit and cherish.”



The National Memorial to Victims of Communism will be located on Confederation Boulevard (Wellington Street) beside the Supreme Court of Canada and Library and Archives Canada, with views toward the Peace Tower and other key federal institutions.

The National Capital Commission will be responsible for the construction of the memorial. Once construction is completed, ownership and maintenance of the monument will be transferred to Public Works and Government Services Canada. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2015.



Image Credits: ABSTRAKT Studio Architecture team: Voytek Gorczynski Architect, Toronto, Canada; Janusz Kapusta Artist, New York, USA; Andrzej Pawlik Architect, Warsaw, Poland

To view a video of the memorial design, click here:
http://www.abstraktstudio.ca/MVOC_video.html

West Coast Fundraiser for Memorial

On September 19th a fundraiser was held in Vancouver to raise funds for the National Memorial to Victims of Communism. The organizing efforts for the fundraiser were headed by Ron Suh, a board member of Tribute to Liberty. Senator Yonah Martin was also instrumental in the success of the fundraiser.

The Honourable James Moore, Minister of Industry, was the keynote speaker for the event which raised close to \$50,000.



History Unhidden *From Steppe to Prairie*

Many ethnic groups are readily recognizable as victims of Communism, especially those whose desperate escapes have become iconic images of the historical narrative of the Cold War: the Hungarians in 1956, the Cubans in the 1960s, the Vietnamese boat people of the late 1970s or the Cambodians who survived the class genocide of the Khmer Rouge. It may surprise many to know that in Canada the single largest ethnic group associated with refugees from Communist dictatorships is the German Canadians. They represent 45% of the estimated eight million Canadians who have been affected. Perhaps, given the history of the first half of the twentieth century, there has been reluctance within this group to draw attention to themselves as victims however legitimate the justification.

When the Bolsheviks (Communists) came to power in Russia, my mother, Christina Schafer, was a young

woman in the village of Landau on the east bank of the Berezan River northeast of Odessa, Ukraine. The thriving village was founded by German settlers in 1810 following Czar Alexander I's invitation to foreigners, especially Germans, to settle the empty steppes and thereby help to consolidate Russia's reconquest following the defeat of the Tartars.

Born in 1897 into a close family and nurtured in the Catholic faith as well as German music and literature, Christina Bernhardt was raised in a self-contained German community. Events and decisions in far-off places like Moscow must have seemed part of another world that had little to do with the people of Landau or their daily lives.

This all changed in 1917. My mother was alone one day as her family was visiting relatives in another village. Bolshevik militia suddenly appeared and occupied Landau. Mom was forced to cook for them. As they ate she escaped into the forest and evaded their search. In the morning, they left after shooting many of the young men of the village.

I am Rose (Schafer) Schultz, Christina (Bernhardt) Schafer's eldest daughter. In a memoir I wrote of my mother's life, I recounted that her experience in 1917 "...was the beginning of the Russian Revolution. The following years were filled with uncertainty, sometimes with terror. But the family survived."

Life went on with increasing difficulty under Communist rule. Christina married Joseph Schafer and by 1929 had four children, two girls and two boys. In the previous years, the crippling taxes on agricultural production imposed by the Communist government had impoverished even the hardest working farmers. On one occasion my father and grandfather miraculously avoided execution when flour they had concealed behind a false wall escaped detection during a diligent search by the Bolsheviks. By 1927 my father's parents had moved to Landau with nothing but the possessions they could carry after their prosperous land was confiscated by the state and made part of a collective farm.

In the autumn of 1929 Father was called to a meeting where state officials informed the community that all the German teachers were fired and replaced by Russian speaking teachers approved by the Bolshevik Party. Villagers who didn't accept the decision were advised to leave the country. Father felt that our future was too important and he and Mother chose the uncertainties of life in another country rather than remain where their very existence was threatened in

the Communist Soviet Union/Russia. On November 29, 1929, Mother and Father said "Goodbye" to family, friends and the only home my mother had ever known.

In Moscow we were kept in an internment camp on the Moscow River on the outskirts of the city. I was seven years old then, and can still vividly hear the crying of women and children in the large vehicles that were stopped out on the road. When they found certain families on their lists, the Communists forced the men into one vehicle, the women and children into another, and, (as my father was told), sent them all to Siberia to the work camps and likely death.

The summer cottages in which we were held in late November were improperly heated. My sister Lydia had had lengthy illnesses in the past. But it was John, our nine-month old baby brother who soon became sick with pneumonia. Baby John died in my arms as the train taking us to Germany reached the Polish border. Mother was nearly inconsolable over baby John's death. Despite being on a train and fleeing her country, she wanted to at least provide her baby with a proper Christian burial. Finally one of the train guards stepped in, took John from her and assured my mother that he would give John a decent burial.



In Hamburg there was a wait of three months as preparations for their onward journey to Canada were made. Mother fell into despondency (likely depression), and had to be hospitalized. In Antwerp we boarded the ocean liner *Metagama*. Arriving in Halifax we then boarded a train for the long journey to western Canada. During a stop in Winnipeg, Manitoba we were met by officials of the Canadian *Deutscher Bund*, an organization that had sponsored our travel costs as a loan. In Regina, Saskatchewan we left the

train and traveled by car 100 kilometers north to Holdfast, an ethnic German village where we were warmly welcomed and given assistance to begin our lives in our adopted country. From the Russian-Ukraine Steppes to the Canadian Prairies we had fled from an environment of totalitarian dictatorship to arrive in a free, democratic country governed by the rule of law.

In Canada, however, my mother had to endure yet further trials, though of a non-political nature. She and Papa had arrived just after the 1929 stock market crash and at the start of a decade-long drought which made parts of Saskatchewan a dustbowl. Within three years Papa died of an aneurysm and Mama was left alone to raise us children who now numbered four with the addition of a baby girl, Theresia.



Despite her poverty Mama succeeded to eventually pay back the transportation loan, a debt that she saw as a moral obligation so that other refugees could come to Canada. In 1937 she obtained her Canadian citizenship, an event that left her crying for joy and appreciation. In my memoir of my mother's life I noted: "Mama once told me she never felt at home in Ukraine after the Bolsheviks took power – she lived in constant fear. Canada was her home; with all her poverty, her care of and for us, she felt happy and content – and fearless."

But in Ukraine the dictates of Communist rule inflicted man-made tragedies on a national scale, especially in German communities. My mother's parents were to immediately follow us to Canada, but when they applied to emigrate they were informed that no further exit visas would be issued. In 1929 their farm was taken by the Communists. Within a few years the state-manufactured famine of the *Holodomor* genocide decimated communities like Landau. My grandparents did not survive long. Words from friends in Ukraine and Germany informed us that Grandpa died shortly after we left. Grandma died of starvation

because she was homeless. Anyone who was caught accommodating her would be 'disenfranchised' (and sometimes shot). Mama's two brothers fled to Germany.

In 1937 the village priest was convicted in a show trial of political crimes and sent into the gulag. The beloved village church was taken over by the authorities and used for military training purposes. During the war the remaining ethnic German inhabitants were expelled into internal exile and the village was renamed Shyrokolanivka as new inhabitants moved in.

German emigration out of Russia preceded Communist rule but when the Bolsheviks took power there were distinct, successive waves of flight from oppression and discrimination: 1917-1921, the late 1920s, the 1940s, the 1970s and then from 1987 until the final collapse of Communist rule in 1991.

Mama lived to 97 years of age, long enough to see the collapse of the *Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR)*. I don't know what she would have thought of a memorial for Victims of Communism, but I don't think she ever saw, or thought of herself as a 'Victim.' More likely she would have regarded herself and Papa as survivors whose decision to flee Communist rule was simply in keeping with their shared devotion to their faith, their family, and their freedom. Deeply religious, she may well have seen the actions of the Communists as a sin for which there would be a divine accounting rather than today's secular charge of crimes against humanity.

I suspect, however, that Mama would have fully agreed it was a good thing to have, in the centre of the nation's capital, a prominent, physical reminder of the catastrophic consequences of Communist ideology and a constant warning against its return.

Submitted by: Rose Schultz

History Unhidden

Returning to the Gulag to Face the Scars of Soviet Terror

I can't remember exactly how I asked my 90 year old grandfather Eduard—10 years ago—if he would join me and return to the Gulag camp that he managed to escape from in 1942. Did I tell him that the journey

would be the equivalent of a round trip road journey between Toronto and Miami? Did I warn him that dodgy hotels and a diet of cabbage soup and pirogues lay ahead? Or that the walls of roadside bathrooms would be covered with decades of fecal matter?

Probably not, because I could not have known what lay ahead on our journey to Stalin's Gulag killing fields at the edge of Siberia, in the far north of Russia where the land is haunted by millions of souls.

The lives of millions were stolen when families were broken up and forcibly deported to work for the Soviets as slaves. And as slaves, millions died. They came from dozens of nations: Russians, Poles, Finns, Americans, Germans, Latvians and Estonians. Stalin's victims also came from ethnic groups that have all but been forgotten; entire nations eliminated wholesale by the vicious Soviet system.

My grandfather, Eduard, was also stolen from his family. But his odyssey, no more or less remarkable than any other, ended quite unlike those of most Gulag survivors—happily.

In 1939, Stalin forced the Baltic states to accept permanent Soviet military bases in their countries and shortly thereafter annexed the countries via staged referendums and elections—not at all unlike that which we have seen in Crimea and Donetsk today. Many citizens, primarily men, fled into the woods and swamps to hide from Soviet authorities as did my grandfather and his brothers.

In order to survive, they were compelled to liberate food and other materials from known communists and soviet collaborators. At the time, Eduard was quartered under a small haystack at the edge of a grove a few kilometres from his wife's family farm—my grandmother was expecting twins.

During a late spring raid in 1941, to gather essential supplies from the shed of a local Soviet aparatchik, Eduard was identified as one of the "bandits" and an arrest warrant was issued. Local NKVD/KGB and their collaborators paid a visit to my grandmother's family farm and threatened to kill the entire family, and burn the farm if they refused to give up Eduard's location (Eduard's uncle—a landowning farmer—had been tortured to death after Soviet agents had gauged out his eyes and burned him to death). At the same time Stalin imposed a compulsory and illegal mobilization of all eligible Estonian men into the Soviet Red Army. Eduard's solution to the KGB ultimatum was to give himself up for mobilization along with over 30,000 other Estonian men.

But instead of taking the Estonian men to military bases for training, they were sent to remote areas of the Soviet Union, to work in forests and factories as slave labourers. In Eduard's Gulag camp, he estimated that at least 1/3 of the Estonian men died from malnourishment, or exposure to cold and disease. Although he was among the few lucky Estonians to escape—having crossed the front lines at the second battle of Velkie Luki, the unspeakable horrors he witnessed and experienced scarred Eduard and his family for decades.



Eduard spoke very little about his experience in the Gulag or his escape. In fact, upon his arrival back at home following his escape, my grandmother scolded him for leaving her to raise their newborn twins on her own (she never recognized that he had voluntarily given himself up to protect his family). The first time Eduard gave a full account of his ordeal was in 1993 when I asked him about the "Siberia business" while I was in Toronto on break from university in Chicago. Clearly what my grandfather had witnessed and lived through caused deep psychological scars which he never confronted until we travelled back to the camps in 2004.

I still think about my own father's upbringing and wonder how much of it had been affected by Eduard's experience. I also wonder how the tens of millions of families of victims and survivors have faced this dark historical and psychological legacy. Few experts, like Estonian historian and psychologist Imbi Paju, have examined this aspect of widespread national trauma that was caused by Soviet authorities, aparatchiks and collaborators.

In 2004, when Eduard agreed to join me to film his return to Gulag 113, he was concerned that Putin's FSB would arrest him at the border for escaping from his camp. If that fear remained in 2004 (a fully understandable fear given Putin's psychotic positions

leading up to the present day), how did his other experiences haunt him during the preceding 60 years?

In the town that acted as the administrative center for the regional camps in the area, Kotlas, there remains a expansive communal grave for the masses who died or were executed in regional camps. Visiting that location—where many of Eduard's compatriots would have been buried—Eduard's emotions, also buried for 60 years, came to bear when the memories of the unspeakable suffering, death, and his fallen compatriots were refreshed by being there. I had never witnessed the tears that flowed from Eduard that afternoon at the mass gravesite in Kotlas. Eduard was finally released to grieve those who did not survive and the loss of his own youthful innocence.

I was incredibly fortunate to have been given the opportunity to experience that journey with my grandfather: to face the dark past together and to reconcile that with the present.

Those who knew my grandfather all commented how he seemed to walk with a lighter step and speak more openly and freely after his return from that place of death and misery.



Sadly, other survivors and the families of victims will never have the opportunity to confront the deep psychological damage that the Soviet system inflicted on hundreds of millions and that continues to haunt millions today. Although we have monuments to mourn the victims, the scars will never heal without justice. Nor does Vladimir Putin's ongoing sinister glorification of Soviet crimes as great achievements, make healing or reconciliation possible.

More can be learned about Eduard's experience at realworldpictures.ca

Submitted by: Marcus Kolga

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