



TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY News

Commemorating the Victims of Totalitarian Communism

Volume 3, Issue 1
Winter 2011

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.

Board of Directors:
Alide Forstmanis, Chair
Teresa Berezowski
Christine Chi Dang
Reet Marten Sehr
Gery Kokodyniak

Honorary Patron:
Philip Leong

Founding Partner:
The Open Book Group

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



Tribute to Liberty
P.O. Box 84558
2336 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario M6S 4Z7
info@tributetoliberty.ca
www.tributetoliberty.ca

Charitable #: 814999660RR0001

Recognition of the Latvian Community's Support for the Memorial

Since Tribute to Liberty began raising funds for the memorial to victims of Communism in Ottawa, organizations and individuals from the Latvian community in Canada have been very generous with their donations.

These donations, some of which have messages and stories attached to them, can be viewed on The Pathway to Liberty at www.tributetoliberty.ca. In this newsletter, Tribute to Liberty would like to thank Latvian organizations and individuals for their contributions to a project that is obviously important to the Latvian community in Canada.

In 1940, Latvia was occupied by and incorporated into the Soviet Union. What followed was the establishment of a brutal Communist regime that resulted in mass terror including executions, systematic repression and deportations. 214,905 persons suffered from Communist repressions in Latvia and 59,742 were deported. Imminent Communist terror forced at least 265,000 to flee from the country. Explicit terror subsided after Stalin's death; however, the Communist regime persisted with its systematic russification policy. This policy reduced the share of ethnic Latvians in the country from 77% in 1935 to 52% in 1989. Latvia was restored to independence in 1991, and still suffers the marks of Communism (CommunistCrimes.org).

Donations from Latvian organization:

Latvian Relief Society of Canada	\$23,000.00
Latvian National Federation in Canada	\$15,000.00
Latvian Relief Society of Canada - Toronto Branch	\$2,000.00
Karlis Ulmanis Memorial Foundation	\$1,645.00
Latvian Relief Society of Canada - Kitchener Waterloo Branch	\$1,000.00
Latvian Relief Society of Canada - Sudbury Branch	\$500.00
Latvian Relief Society of Canada - St. Catharines Branch	\$500.00

Tribute to Liberty encourages other communities to come forward and match or exceed the Latvian community's generosity. In future newsletters, the contributions of other communities to the memorial project will be highlighted.

A sample of brick messages from Latvian organizations:

Bricks 00002 – 21, Donated by Latvian Relief Society of Canada, Toronto Branch

In thanks to the Latvian soldiers who, in WWII, sacrificed their lives in the attempt to prevent the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Red Army.

Bricks 00050 – 199, Donated by Latvian National Federation in Canada

In memory of those who were lost on the path of torture in the Soviet Gulag.

To the starving men who fell by the roadsides.

To the mothers who held their frozen children in their arms.

To the children whose souls were gathered by God in the vastness of Siberia.

To the heroes who sacrificed their lives so Latvia would be a free and democratic country.

Let the world know the price we have paid for our right to exist as a nation.

Bricks 00420 – 422, Donated by Latvian Relief Society of Canada - St. Catharines Branch
In memory of those who never returned.



Tribute to Liberty Board Chair, Alide Forstmanis, with Juris Eglitis, President of the Latvian Relief Society of Canada.

Tribute to Liberty Attends Canadian Polish Congress' New Year's Reception

On January 8th, Alide Forstmanis, Tribute to Liberty Board Chair, participated in the Canadian Polish Congress' New Year's Reception, held at the Polish Combatant's Hall in Toronto.

The evening included traditional Polish food and entertainment, and speeches from local politicians and officials from the Polish community. Mrs. Forstmanis addressed the audience with the following remarks:

Thank you for giving me a few minutes to speak about Tribute to Liberty and the memorial to victims of totalitarian Communism to be built in Ottawa.

We have approval from the government to build the memorial, we have the land upon which to build it—a beautiful piece of land centrally located in the Garden of the Provinces and Territories in Ottawa—and, we are recognized and supported by many Canadian communities and politicians of all stripes.

Our next step is to hold a national design competition, in which artists from your communities will be able to enter—this will be a wonderful way to involve your communities in the project.

However, before we can begin the competition, a significant amount of funding needs to be in place—

approximately two-thirds of the cost of the memorial, roughly \$600,000.

For this project to keep on track, we need the help of your communities—we need help fundraising.

There are many ways in which this can be done, and each community has its own way of helping—through events, mailing campaigns, or by approaching individuals who are capable of making major donations.

The Vietnamese community for example, held a large fundraising dinner last spring, raising over \$20,000 for the memorial, and they are planning another event for this year.

The Latvians, my own community, have donated large amounts to the project—and they are a very small community compared to many of the other communities.

This memorial is for all—it represents the suffering of all victims, equally.

A Cambodian, executed merely because he wore glasses, a Roman Catholic living in Soviet Ukraine, sent to the gulag for owning a rosary, and a North Korean, imprisoned for making a joke about the dear leader's height.

Whether you look at it on the level of individual victims or whole groups, such as the Poles who were targeted during the Great Terror, or the Ukrainians who died by the millions in the Holodomor, everyone is included in this memorial.

This memorial will educate as well as commemorate—already through the numerous articles published in the media about the memorial, Canadians are slowly learning about the extent of the damage done through Communism, and the importance of this knowledge to our understanding of the history of the 20th century is beginning to be felt.

I ask for your help in building this memorial—we have received so many words of support, and now we need those words to be backed up financially. Thank you again for this opportunity to speak with you today.



Alide Forstmanis addresses the audience at the Polish Combatant's Hall on January 8th.

History Unhidden

Reflections of a Daughter of Parents Who Fleed Communist Czechoslovakia

By Andrea Mrozek

It was the summer of 1989 when my family would visit Poland for the first time since my parents left Czechoslovakia in 1969. The thawing of Communist regimes at that time meant my parents could travel to Poland, but not Czechoslovakia, their home. Going there would have meant arrest.

This was my first physical encounter with Communism. I saw the heavily guarded Czech/Polish border, two apparently allied Warsaw Pact countries. I saw empty shelves in grocery stores, ancient Trabants and Ladas and grey, tired stucco in various stages of disrepair. I was left with an impression of grey streets, grey buildings, grey cars.

This may have been my first time in a Communist country; it was not by a long shot my first experience with Communism. Growing up, my sister and I were well aware of why my parents left their homes, families, and country. The word “Communist” loomed large and was on par with “Nazi.”

One simple experience is that I grew up without any extended family. We didn’t really know our grandparents, in spite of short visits on intervals throughout the years. None of our aunts or uncles emigrated.

Though I don’t speak Czech, the one phrase I will always remember is *slyšiš mě*. It means “can you hear me?” This was the refrain, shouted over the phone lines when, on rare occasions my parents would call our grandparents at the cost of four dollars a minute. The line would fail and my parents would call back, asking again and again if they could be heard. Sometimes the line would hold and we would shout *sto lat* into the phone, the Polish version of Happy Birthday.

My dad told us how, as a little boy, he was dragged before a commission with his parents for whispering something negative under his breath when Communist propaganda played prior to a feature movie in a movie theatre. He was so young that he cried in the interrogation room. As a young adult, my dad was told he had to do physical labour at a steel foundry, to overcome *nabožensky zatížen*. Directly translated this meant my dad was “religiously burdened,” which work in a steel foundry would apparently rectify before going to university. My mom told us about how her dad’s business was seized and nationalized. When my mom’s beloved grandmother passed away she was not allowed to go to her funeral. Both my parents were branded as traitors for leaving and were tried and sentenced *in absentia*.

We would send packages. Dried apricots and vitamins and medicines my grandparents couldn’t get. I sent over my

entire Smurf collection to my cousin at one point, a generous gesture, which as an eight-year-old I later deeply regretted. I could have played with the Smurfs. I’d never see my cousin.

My grandparents sent packages too. One standout to this very day is a marionette theatre, complete with curtains and different stage backdrops and beautiful little puppets: A princess, a prince, a witch, the devil, among others. Another was a stuffed “Vodnik” (water monster) from the old tale meant to scare children away from swimming when parents aren’t watching. My Vodnik was friendly, however, with a big felt smile and dapper top hat sewn on.

I was already 13 when Communism fell. I had prayed for it to end in my bed as a little girl. My parents did not tell me to pray for this. But Communism represented oppression and distance and in my little soul, it seemed like something to take to God.

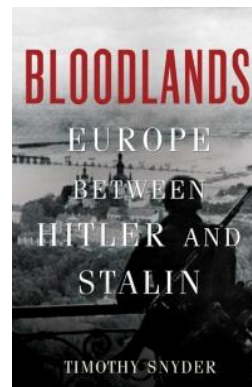
When it was clear the Berlin Wall would not be rebuilt, there were many more visits to Czech Republic. Yet there are things that immigrants give up that can never be recaptured. Every immigrant is caught between two worlds, and in some respects, neither is fully home. When I would later live in Czech Republic after university it did not feel like home and I was glad to come back to Canada.

These are the experiences of a daughter of parents who fled Communism—a second hand experience from a very comfortable life growing up in mid-town Toronto. I am proud of my parents. I am grateful that I don’t actually have any first hand experience with Communism. My parents left so I didn’t have to.

Andrea Mrozek is a first generation Canadian, born to a Polish father and a Czech mother who left Czechoslovakia in 1969, arriving in Canada in 1970. She works at a public policy think tank in Ottawa.

Resource Spotlight

***Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*
Timothy Snyder
Basic Books, 2010**



New York Times bestseller *Bloodlands* details the killing policies of Hitler and Stalin in the 30s and 40s in the area Snyder has termed the Bloodlands: Poland, the Baltics, Soviet Belarus, Soviet Ukraine, and the western edge of Soviet Russia. *Bloodlands* is a must-read for anyone interested in this area of history.

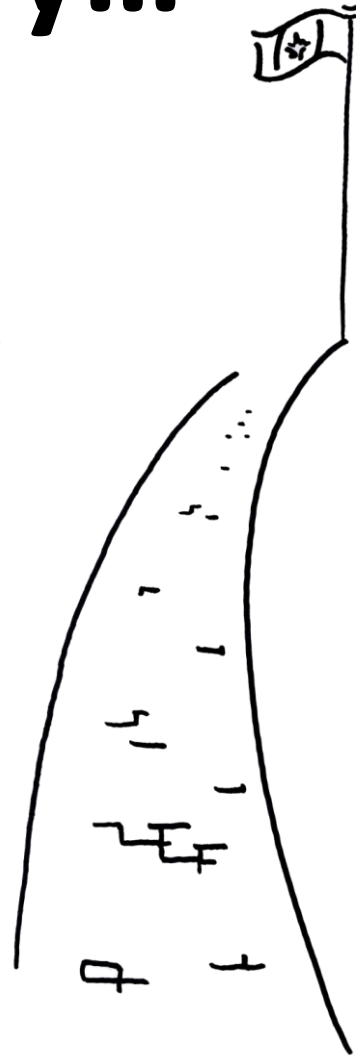
Tell Your Story...

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

Tribute to Liberty is a registered charity. Charitable Number: 814999660RR0001