



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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Ukrainian Community Fundraising Event for Memorial to Victims of Communism

On Sunday, February 5th, the Toronto and Etobicoke/Mississauga Chapters of the League of Ukrainian Canadians (LUC), League of Ukrainian Canadian Women (LUCW), the Ukrainian Youth Association of Canada (CYM), and the Society of Veterans of UPA, in cooperation with Tribute to Liberty, hosted a Benefit Luncheon with distinguished Members of Parliament, to raise funds for the establishment of a memorial to the victims of totalitarian Communism in Canada's national capital region.

200 tickets were sold for the luncheon, which took place at the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Community Centre in Toronto. Organizations, families and individuals of all ages from all communities were invited. Members of Parliament Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke Lakeshore), Ted Opitz (Etobicoke-Centre), and Bob Dechert (Mississauga Erindale) were present at the event.

The event's program began with the Canadian and Ukrainian national anthems, performed by Baturyn Concert Marching Band with Petrusia Chornopyski conducting. A prayer was said by Rev. Father Ihor Panchyshyn (Ukrainian Catholic Church) and Rev. Father Volodymyr Makarenko (Ukrainian Orthodox Church). The welcoming address was made by Mr. Peter Kardasz, President of LUC Etobicoke/Mississauga Branch and a member of the Tribute to Liberty Board of Directors. Mrs. Alide Forstmanis, Chair of the Board of Tribute to Liberty, also spoke.

After lunch, Mr. Orest Steciw, National President of LUC, gave welcoming remarks. Each of the three MPs then spoke. During his speech, Mr. Dechert referenced the Federal Government's support for the memorial as stated in the 2010 Speech from the Throne, and said that he believes "it is important that we reflect upon the past in order to move forward." Mr. Trottier furthered this idea in his speech: "That is why we must remind people of this great human tragedy. We must never forget our history. We must teach it in the schools and other fora of the public square, and we should build monuments like the one we will build in Canada's capital. We must remind people that Communism, conceived in the 19th century, implemented to great human suffering in the 20th century, will not be allowed to destroy lives in the 21st century and beyond."



Mr. Dechert brought official greetings from Prime Minister Stephen Harper:

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to everyone taking part in the benefit luncheon of the Canadian Conference in Support of Ukraine for the establishment of a memorial to the victims of totalitarian Communism.

Joseph Stalin's genocidal policy of collectivization and mass starvation robbed the Ukrainian people of their aspirations for a free and independent state and cost the lives of millions of innocent men, women, and children. The wounds left by this historical crime are still carried in the hearts of the more than 1.2 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent, many of whom lost relatives in the Holodomor.

Today's event offers a wonderful chance to raise funds for the Memorial to Victims of Totalitarian Communism—Canada, a Land of Refuge in our nation's capital. It is through acts of remembrance—like this tangible one—that we restore dignity and humanity to the millions of victims of Communism. Over 8 million Canadians can trace their origins to countries that suffered under Communism: from Ukraine, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Baltic States to Mao's China and Communist Vietnam. In Canada, they found a refuge, a land of democracy and liberty.

I would like to commend the event organizers and supporters for their efforts to help ensure that the lessons of the past are never forgotten. Please accept my best wishes for an enjoyable luncheon and every success in meeting your fundraising goals.



The event ended with a musical performance by Solomiya and Ivanka Salo and Baturyn, and closing remarks were made by Mrs. Marika Kret.

The event was a wonderful opportunity for people to learn more about the memorial project and to raise funds for it, and to hear from distinguished Members of Parliament.

Tribute to Liberty is grateful to the organizations and individuals from the Ukrainian community responsible for this wonderful event.

Tribute to Liberty Participates in Vietnamese Lunar New Year Celebration

On January 14th, Tribute to Liberty Board Chair Mrs. Alide Forstmanis participated in the Tet (Vietnamese Lunar New Year) Celebration in Kitchener. Approximately 350 people were in attendance.

Mrs. Forstmanis spoke to the audience about the memorial project, and a round of applause erupted when she stated the title of the memorial, which includes the word “Communism.”

Funds for the memorial to victims of Communism were raised at the event by the Vietnamese community's Tribute to Liberty Fundraising Support Committee. The committee is planning to have a fundraising event for the memorial in the coming months.



From L to R: Mr. Nguyen Hoang, Mr. Nguyen Van Phep, Mrs Tuyet Nguyen, Mr. Le Huu Chinh, Mrs. Alide Forstmanis, Mr. Le Minh Tuan, Mr. Nguyen Van Tan.

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

On January 13th, Mrs. Alide Forstmanis, Tribute to Liberty Board Chair, attended 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.

In her remarks to the audience, Teresa Berezowski, President of the Canadian Polish Congress and a member of the board of Tribute to Liberty, spoke of the memorial project and said that the Polish community will put forth efforts in the coming year to raise funds for the memorial.

Human Rights in North Korea Forum

Mrs. Alide Forstmanis, Chair of the Tribute to Liberty Board, attended the Human Rights in North Korea Forum on December 10th in Toronto.

The theme of the forum was "The Fall of Kimism: Dangers, Challenges and Opportunities." A representative from the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea spoke about the "Forget-Me-Not" campaign, for the prisoners in the North Korean gulag. Canadian politicians from all parties participated.

Update on Tribute to Liberty's Request for a Change to the NCC's Policy Regarding On-Site Donor Recognition

In the last issue of Tribute to Liberty News, it was reported that Tribute to Liberty had requested that the National Capital Commission (NCC) change its policy regarding on-site donor recognition. Currently, the NCC's policy is: "Donor contributions to the commemoration, whether financial or other, shall not be acknowledged in any manner as part of the commemorative site."

Tribute to Liberty raised the issue with the NCC in Fall 2011. The NCC has told Tribute to Liberty to expect a response on the issue in March.

Tribute to Liberty is hopeful the NCC will change its policy regarding on-site donor recognition as it wants to be able to recognize donors at the memorial site. Stay tuned.

History Unhidden

Varsad, Hungary Deportations

At the start of World War II, approximately 10% of Hungary's population were ethnic Germans. Most of these had lived in Hungary for over 250 years, having been settled there by the Austrian Crown to reclaim the land devastated by the Turkish occupation of over 150 years. Varsad—pronounced "Vashad" by the locals, "Varshad" in Magyar—was a German village with about 1,000 inhabitants in southwest Hungary.

In late 1944, the battle-front, in the form of advancing Soviet troops, was moving into the region. Only two individuals—my grandmother and her neighbour, taking what they could carry—had accepted the offer from the German authorities to be evacuated west, earlier in the year. Most people who owned property didn't want to leave it or could not imagine that, despite a likely Soviet occupation, all would not turn out for the best. They were mistaken.

Soviet troops entered Varsad on December 1, 1944, unleashing several weeks of rape and pillage common across eastern Europe at the time. My father's cousin and a score of other women and girls were able to seek refuge in the Russian command post, where they were protected by a sympathetic officer.

On December 26th, all women aged 18 to 30 and men aged 17 to 45 were to report to the commandant. There were few of the latter because most had been drafted. At first, many claimed to be Magyars (ethnic Hungarians) to avoid an as yet unknown fate. Later it became clear to the Russians that all were in fact Germans and that they would therefore be deported for slave labour in the Soviet Union. After some weeks in railway cattle-cars, with little food or drink, they arrived in the Donbas coal region, where most would be put to work in the mines. Rations were below survival level and many died, particularly those from (previously) richer farm families who were not used to hard physical labour.

The cousin of my father's, mentioned above, was 21 years old when she reached Bavaria, which was occupied by the Americans. She had survived 18 months in the mines and weighed only 37 kilos, so she was released due to "ill health." Her sister died in one of the camps.

It is estimated that up to 35,000 ethnic German civilians, and 30,000 P.O.W.s, were deported from Hungary for slave labour in the Soviet Union. Of these approximately 6,000 perished. A further 250,000 German-Hungarians were expelled to western Germany and Austria by order of the Soviet occupiers, losing their property and livelihood. Over 50,000 are thought to have lost their lives during the expulsion.

To the horrible toll of World War II were added these innocent lives. They were victims of totalitarianism, of Communism.

Submitted by: John Weissenberger



The house of Mr. Weissenberger's grandparents in Varsad—a typical "Colonist house," common to the German villages of Hungary.

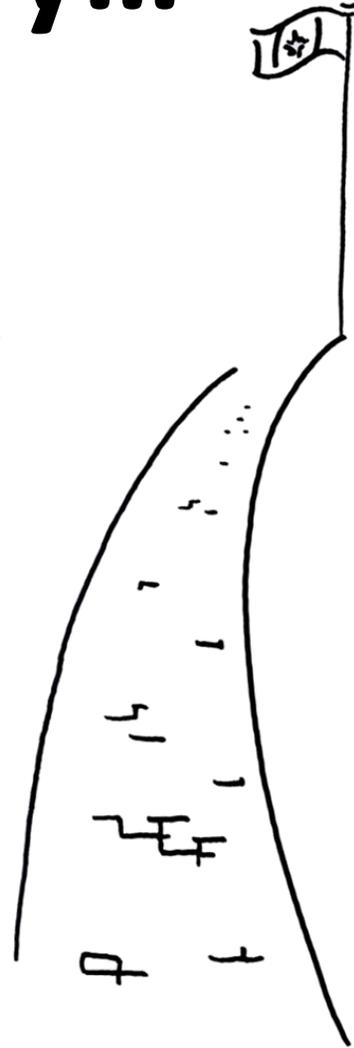
Tell Your Story...

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:
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