



MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM

TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY



Newsletter

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Project Update

Tribute to Liberty is still waiting for an update from Canadian Heritage about plans to finalize and unveil the Memorial. We are waiting for Canadian Heritage to provide clarity on this so that an inauguration can be held. We hope to provide good news on this soon.

History Unhidden

Victims of Communism Memorial Day Recognizes Tens of Millions Murdered

This article was written by Dawn Beutner, and first appeared in Catholic World Report, November 7, 2022.

Since the collapse of communist governments in many countries in the late twentieth century, there has been a movement to recognize the human damage done by the bloody political ideology.

Has your state formally recognized November 7 as Victims of Communism Memorial Day? Five US states (Alabama, Florida, Texas, Utah, and Virginia) have done so, and eight more (Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina) have plans to join them.

Why should we remember victims of communism on November 7? May 1—the day of the year on which communist governments have traditionally celebrated their ideology—might seem a better choice. However, to avoid competition with their well-known May Day celebrations, the general consensus has moved toward the anniversary of the date when the first communist regime was established.

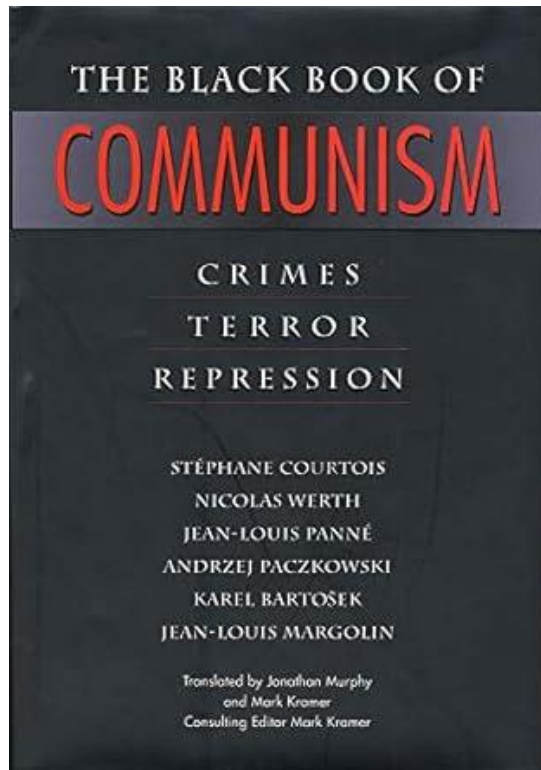
On November 7, 1917, Red Guards took over the Winter Palace and ousted the Russian Provisional Government, giving Vladimir Lenin and his Bolsheviks control of Russia. Communism subsequently spread to other countries throughout the twentieth century, from Eastern European nations such as Poland after World War II, to Asian nations such as Cambodia, and to African nations such as Angola.

Since the collapse of communist governments in many countries in the late twentieth century, there has been a movement to recognize the human damage done by the bloody political ideology. The **Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation**, for example, is promoting this memorial date to encourage us to remember annually the men, women, and children who lived and died under communism. That foundation publicizes the stories of the

real suffering endured by those who have lived under communism, and it seeks justice for those who are still living under communism. This is clearly not a problem of the past; as their website points out, “one-fifth of the world’s population still lives under single-party communist regimes in China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam.”

According to ***The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*** (Harvard University Press, 1999), the number of people who died under communism is truly staggering. Based on unofficial totals, communism caused:

20 million deaths in the USSR
65 million deaths in China
1 million deaths in Vietnam
2 million deaths in North Korea
2 million deaths in Cambodia
1 million deaths in Eastern Europe
150,000 deaths in Latin America
1.7 million deaths in Africa
1.5 million deaths in Afghanistan
10,000 deaths internationally through the communist movement



These estimated deaths come from secular sources. It is not always possible to be certain about such totals, due to communist governments’ predilection for the use of massacres, killing fields, and prison camps. But it is widely believed that 100 million human beings have

died under communism from that fateful day of November 7, 1917, to the present.

The secular world may keep track of communism’s victims; the Catholic Church keeps track of her martyrs. There is, in the month of November, no shortage of either.

The conflict known as the Spanish Civil War is not included in the grand tally of communism’s victims above, probably because that number generally doesn’t include victims of wars. The 286 Spanish men and women who were executed by communist sympathizers in the single month of November in 1936 are considered martyrs by the Church because they were killed out of hatred for their Catholic faith. This is easy to prove since most of these martyrs were priests, religious brothers, and religious sisters. However, this number also includes seven laymen who are remembered on November 6. Why were these seven men—two of whom were teenagers—targeted for their faith? Apparently, membership in the Association of the Miraculous Medal, a pious association of the laity which promotes devotion to the Blessed Mother and the wearing of her famous medal, was considered a crime worthy of death.

On November 5, 1950, Blessed Hryhoriy Lakota died a martyr in Russia. He was born in Ukraine and became a priest, as well as an auxiliary bishop of Przemyśl in Poland. When the USSR took control of Poland after World War II, communist leaders simply sent many Catholic leaders to prison camps to try to destroy the practice of the faith. Hryhoriy was one of those leaders. He died in Vorkuta Corrective Labor Camp, a major gulag in the USSR, which housed common criminals, POWs, and other “enemies of the state”. Survivors of the camp later remembered Hryhoriy’s virtuous behavior, despite its brutal conditions. When Morris West wrote his novel *The Shoes of the Fisherman*, he modeled his main character, Kiril Pavlovich Lakota, after two men: Blessed Hryhoriy and Ukrainian bishop Josyf Slipyi.

On November 5, the Church remembers thirty-eight Catholics who were martyred in Albania during the many years that Christians endured repression under communists. Almost all of these martyrs, who died between 1945 and 1974, were Albanian priests. Many endured months of torture in prison before they were executed. Blessed Maria Tuci, the only woman in the group, was a schoolteacher and was twenty-two years old at the time of her death. After she refused the sexual advances of a member of the secret police, she was arrested and accused of the crime of teaching the

catechism to her students. She refused to divulge information about other Catholics, even after being brutally tortured for over a year. The hospital workers who cared for Maria before her death remembered that she forgave her torturers and died holding her rosary.

November also marks the dates of the martyrdoms of three priests and two bishops from Eastern Europe. Blessed Vincent Eugene Bossilkov was a Passionist priest of Bulgaria and titular bishop who died a martyr on November 11, 1952. Blessed Peter (Kamen) Vitchev and two other priests of the Congregation of Augustinians of the Assumption were executed by firing squad and died as martyrs on November 13, 1952. Blessed Josaphat Kotsylovsky was a Basilian monk and bishop of Przemyśl, Poland, when he was subjected to a mock trial and sent to a prison camp near Kiev, Ukraine. Josaphat died on November 17, 1947, as a result of the conditions of the prison. All five of these men suffered imprisonment and death because communist leaders saw Catholic priests as their enemies in their efforts to control and inspire terror in their civilian populace.

The truth about life under communism is painful and often brutal. It is also virtually absent from most educational curricula. Why are we surprised that young people—and many college-educated adults—are unaware of the dangers of life under communism when they are never taught about those dangers? That's why the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation has developed an **educational program** about the ideology and history of communism, a program which includes both workshops for teachers and curriculum for middle school and high school students.

Whether your state formally recognizes the victims of communism on November 7 or not, think of these blessings during the month of November. And ask them to help us find ways to teach our children the truth about the errors of communism, a truth which starts with an understanding of the dignity of every human life.

History Unhidden

Why Commemorate the Victims of Communism?

Fact 1

According to the "Black Book of Communism" about 100 million people in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America died under the communist repressions. Most of them disappeared in unmarked graves, and their recollection, to say nothing of their remembrance, was prohibited

during the reign of communist regimes.

Fact 2

In 2009 European Parliament called in its resolution "European conscience and totalitarianism" for the proclamation of 23 August as a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, also condemning the crimes of nazism and communism. Victims of nazism and communism are commemorated on this day in many European states and Northern America.

Fact 3

A large portion of the victims of communist regimes were not conscious enemies of the communist regime. They were punished according to their belonging, as 'socially dangerous elements'. These were mostly family members of people who had been branded opponents of the regime, women, children and elderly persons. Communist regimes of terror are part of the historical identity of the peoples who endured them, and of the whole world. The tens of millions of victims of communist terror and genocide, are a warning from the past of the consequences of lust for power and politics guided by inhuman ideologies.



The victims of all regimes of terror deserve honour and remembrance. The comparison of victims and sufferings is cynical. Victims of communism have to be remembered as innocent victims of regimes founded on communist ideology and also as people who stood up to regimes of terror in the name of democracy, the rule of law, and independent statehood, or for other motives.

Communist regimes of terror are part of the historical identity of the peoples who endured them, and of all of Europe and the whole world. The tens of millions of victims of communist terror and genocide, like the victims of Nazi terror, genocide and the Holocaust, are a warning from the past of the consequences of lust for

power and politics guided by ideologies that are hostile towards humanity.

In the 20th century, tens of millions of people in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America fell victim to the social mechanics of communist regimes. Most of them disappeared in unmarked graves, and their recollection, to say nothing of their remembrance, was prohibited during the reign of communist regimes. The numbers of victims became ammunition for the propaganda artillery of the opposing sides during the Cold War. To this day, the question, who killed more, Hitler or Stalin, stimulates more simplistic debate on memory policy.

The resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism passed in the European Parliament in April of 2009 recommended declaring 23 August the day of remembrance for victims of communism and Nazism and this has been done in many European countries and in North America. Some of the participants in the debate on memory policy have deplored this recommendation instead.



The remembrance of the victims of the Nazi regime, first and foremost victims of the Holocaust, and of the victims of communist regimes on one and the same day has been called an attempt to deprive the Holocaust genocide of its historical uniqueness. Eastern European countries are accused of attempting to hide the collaboration of their own peoples with the national socialists at that time behind the remembrance of victims of communism.

‘Former people’ and their family members, political opponents, ‘hostile peoples’, the inhabitants of occupied countries, and others fell victim to communist regimes. Actual and imaginary enemies were destroyed through executions and mass murders, long-term forced labour or imprisonment in Gulag concentration camps in inhuman conditions, deportation to uninhabitable

regions in the Soviet Union or also in other Eastern Bloc countries, incarceration in special psychiatric clinics where inmates were subjected to forced psychiatric treatment, and in other ways. The attacks of communist regimes on their victims were mostly international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes.

A large portion of the victims of communist regimes were not conscious enemies of the communist regime. They were punished according to their belonging, as ‘socially dangerous elements’. These were mostly family members of people who had been branded opponents of the regime, women, children and elderly persons who were deported into forced banishment in uninhabitable regions for fixed time periods or in perpetuity, but such measures were also applied to entire strata of society.

History is not black and white. In the case of victims of terror, countries and peoples that fell victim to two or more regimes of terror experienced this. Men and women who had participated previously in communist terror fell victim to the Gestapo, much like political tribunals of the Eastern Bloc also sentenced persons who had participated in Nazi acts of terror to death or prison camp. Guilt is individual, as is honour and remembrance. Criminals are not commemorated equivalently with victims.

Communist regimes started imprisoning and destroying their political enemies immediately after seizing power. The communist secret police, known as the Cheka, was founded in Russia in December of 1917. In July of 1918, Tsar Nikolai II, who had abdicated the throne a year before then, was murdered together with his family, and the highest leadership of Soviet Russia was aware of this. Both red and white terror held sway during the years of the Russian civil war and millions of people were killed. The collectivisation of agriculture that began in 1929, and the deportations and famine that accompanied it, exacted millions of victims.

A new wave of terror broke out in the latter half of the 1930s (the Great Terror). Among others, tens of thousands of participants in the Bolshevik seizure of power, and leaders of different levels of the Communist Party, state institutions, the Red Army and Navy, and the state security services, fell victim to this terror. At the start of World War II, the communist terror struck the countries and territories that were occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939–1940. The next wave of terror began with the end of World War II and continued until Stalin’s death. Not one Eastern European country that was subjected to the control of the Soviet Union and the

rule of the communist regime was left untouched by the terror in 1944–1949.

The mass terror against alleged and actual political opponents was discontinued soon after Stalin's death in 1953 in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (excluding Albania). Most of the survivors were released from the Gulag prison camps and from forced banishment, and most of those who were released were allowed to return to their homelands. A large proportion was rehabilitated, including the posthumous rehabilitation of those who had been executed or had died in prison camp.

The wave of terror of the Cultural Revolution followed in China (1966–1976). The terror enacted by the Khmer Rouge, who had seized power in Cambodia in 1975, against 'former people' and minorities, first and foremost Vietnamese and Chinese, involved the largest number of victims in relative terms. Over the course of three years, 1.6–1.8 million people, 21–24% of Cambodia's population in 1975, were murdered or died.

A number of communist movements, mostly satellites of the Eastern Bloc in the Cold War, were in power in Asian, African and Latin American countries. For instance, according to different estimates, the red terror campaign carried out in 1977–1978 by the Marxist-Leninist Derg military junta, which ruled Ethiopia since 1975, claimed 30,000–500,000 victims. Similar examples abound for most countries that fell under the rule of communist parties and their imitators.

The communist terror treated the French Revolution's revolutionary tribunals as their models. Great importance was ascribed to justifying the 'guilt' of the victims of terror. The aim was to expose 'conspiracies', mostly fabricated, and to extract confessions from their victims through psychological and physical torture, followed by verdicts of special military tribunals or so-called Special Counsels. The latter handed down verdicts without the accused being present.

The accusations were political: either counterrevolutionary activities, struggle against the workers' movement, but also espionage on behalf of the Western countries or Japan, and in 1948–1953 also on behalf of Yugoslavia. The accused – and guilt was mostly considered already ascertained by the fact of their arrest – were sentenced to long-term forced labour in Gulag prison camps or execution by shooting. The trials of the end of the 1930s and at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s were accompanied by extensive public propaganda campaigns against the better known accused persons, in which communist parties operating

outside the Eastern Bloc, and even some left-wing intellectuals, also participated.

When the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc collapsed, the fate of victims of the communist terror started being investigated in all of those countries, and the places where they were buried started being marked. Refugees in Western countries already memorialised victims of mass communist repressions earlier. Starting on 23 August 1986, the victims of terror in countries that lost their independence as a consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact were remembered on the so-called Black Ribbon Day in North America and Western Europe.

More attention was initially paid to old Bolsheviks, the victims of Stalin's Great Terror, within the framework of glasnost launched at the time when the Soviet Union started to collapse. Attempts were initially made to hush up the terror directed against ethnic minorities and the inhabitants of occupied territories, and to make only Stalin and his henchmen, especially Lavrenti Beria, the scapegoats.

The collapse of the Eastern Bloc did away with the obstacles preventing the remembrance of nationalist leaders, military personnel and politicians, including politicians, military personnel and intellectuals who fought against Bolshevism in Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia and Transcaucasia in 1917–1924, as well as nationalists who fought against the Soviet Union in World War II. Katyń, the murder of officers in 1939–1940, became the symbol of Polish martyrdom, while the crushing of the Revolution of 1956 by the Red Army became a similar symbol in Hungary. Ukraine remembers the genocide victims of the Holodomor, the famine of the 1930s initiated by the leaders of the Communist Party for the destruction of the Ukrainian people. The inhabitants of the Baltic states remember their victims of communism on the memorial days of the deportations of 1941 and 1949.

Museums and memorials to the victims of communism have been established in most countries with populations that have had to suffer through communist terror, but also in Western Europe and North America. Estonia's memorial to its victims of communism was opened on 23 August 2018. The names of more than 22,000 Estonian citizens and inhabitants, who fell victim to the communist regime and are buried in unknown graves, are inscribed on its walls.

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