

## Project Update

Following the sod-turning ceremony in November preparations for construction of the memorial have been in full swing!

During the fall and winter the Memorial to the Victims of Communism has been moving forward with the completion of plans and the securing of the permits and approvals required for site remediation, constructing the base for the memorial, and landscaping.

In February further site analysis is taking place including measuring the depth of the bedrock to ensure the proposed structural engineering is correct before construction. Meanwhile, design work for the “Arc of Memory,” the main sculptural piece of the memorial, is underway. Paul Raff Studio is using computer modeling techniques for the positioning of the rods which will make up the arc.

The finished memorial will consist of over 4000 bronze rods arranged along 365 slender posts, each one pointing at a unique angle of the sun, for every hour of every day, across a year. The memorial is divided in the middle at the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year, inviting visitors to step through in a metaphorical journey from darkness and oppression to lightness and liberty.

Construction is expected to begin this spring and the memorial is scheduled to be inaugurated in fall 2019.

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

Charitable #: 814999660RR0001

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



## ***History Unhidden***

### **Victims at the Wall: Chris Gueffroy**

*November 9, 2019 will mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.*

Chris Gueffroy, born on June 21, 1968 in Pasewalk, moved with his mother to Berlin when he was five years old. [1] When he was in the third grade, athletic scouts noticed his gymnastic talent and sent him to the youth sports school SC Dynamo Berlin. Chris Gueffroy was very hopeful that he would have a successful career as a gymnast. But he also felt increasingly constricted by the state-regimented daily routine. After he finished school he refused to pursue an officer's career track in the National People's Army and was consequently denied the right to study at the university. This destroyed his dream of becoming either an actor or a pilot. In September 1985 he began an apprenticeship in the Schönefeld airport restaurant near Berlin after which he worked in a number of different restaurants.



Chris Gueffroy had a better than average income as a waiter and enjoyed a strong degree of freedom, but he encountered the downside of his profession as well. He repeatedly told his mother how disgusted he was by the widespread corruption in the restaurant business. His friend Christian G., whom he had met at gastronomy school, shared his feelings. Chris Gueffroy, age twenty, began to find it increasingly unbearable to think that he would remain locked up with the knowledge that it would always be this way and that he would never have the freedom to decide for himself where he wanted to live. [2] In mid-January 1989, when Chris Gueffroy learned that he was to be conscripted into the National People's Army in May, he and Christian G. decided to leave East Germany.

The two young men chose not to submit an application for an exit visa to leave East Germany. They feared the harassment at work and in their personal lives that usually accompanied such a move. When they heard from friends that the order to shoot fugitives at the border had been lifted, they became convinced that they should try to flee over the Wall to West Berlin. [3] Chris Gueffroy and Christian G. learned that the Swedish prime minister was going to pay a state visit to East Berlin in early February 1989 and they decided to plan their escape for February 5. They could not imagine that fugitives would be shot at during the official visit and they thought that, were they to be arrested, they would soon be deported to the West. But they had erred tragically on two counts: The order to shoot was still in effect – and the Swedish prime minister had already left East Berlin. [4]

On February 5, 1989 both young men left the apartment they shared at 9 p.m. and approached the border area. They had told their family and friends that they were taking a trip to Prague. [5] At around 10:30 p.m. they reached the small garden colony named "Harmonie" in the East Berlin district of Treptow. They waited for more than an hour in a tool shed and observed the border territory, waiting for an advantageous moment to flee. At around 11:30 p.m. they approached the border fortifications in front of the Britzer Zweigkanal, a canal that forms the border to the West Berlin district of Neukölln. [6] They had brought two self-made kedge anchors with them to help them get across the security grounds. The two athletic men were able to help each other climb over the three-meter-high interior wall without being noticed. Christian G. climbed up onto the top of the Wall first and helped pull Chris Gueffroy up from there. [7] They left one of the kedge anchors behind. When they crawled through the signal fence they set off an optical and acoustic alarm. As both men ran towards the final obstacle, a three-meter-high stretch metal fence, they came under fire from two border guards. To escape the bullets they ran in the opposite direction along the fence and got caught in the fire of two other guards who were also shooting at them. They tried unsuccessfully to use the second kedge anchor to climb over the last fence, after which the two men tried again to help each other up with their hands. A border soldier about 40 meters away from Chris Gueffroy crouched down and fired single shots at the young man's feet. He hit them, but the injured man, in a

state of shock, showed no reaction, so the gunman aimed higher. Chris Gueffroy was standing with his back to the fence when he was hit in the heart. He collapsed and died within minutes from his injuries. [8]

Christian G., injured, was arrested and sentenced in May 1989 to three years in prison for "a severe case of illegally attempting to cross the border." The West German government paid ransom to the Eastern authorities to have him released to the West in mid-October 1989. [9]

Many residents in the East and West heard the shots fired that night in the border territory. A West Berlin witness reported to the police that he heard at least ten shots and saw two men being carried away, one completely motionless. [10] West Berlin newspapers reported the next day on the failed escape attempt. [11]

Chris Gueffroy's mother had also heard the shots. Two days later she paid a visit to one of his friends and learned that her son had been planning to escape and that the shots fired the night before may have been directed at him. That very evening she was picked up by the East German secret police to "clarify circumstances." During the hours of interrogation she learned that her son was dead. The Stasi agents told her that Chris Gueffroy had been seriously injured during an attack on an East German "military security zone" and had died "despite the immediate medical care" that he had been given. [12]

Although the East German authorities did everything in their power to keep the death of Chris Gueffroy a secret, his brother managed to send the eastern paper "Berliner Zeitung" an obituary that was printed on February 21, 1989, making reference to a "tragic accident" that had occurred on February 6. The western media made the connection between the deceased and the shots fired at the border. [13]

Chris Gueffroy was buried on February 23, 1989 at the Baumschulenweg Cemetery in Berlin-Treptow amidst tremendous public sympathy. Well over 100 people paid him the last honors under the watchful eye of the East German secret police. Although the East German secret police imposed massive control measures, [14] a few western correspondents managed to enter East Germany in order to attend the funeral and report on it. [15] That same day a memorial cross in honor of Chris Gueffroy was erected on the West Berlin

side of the Teltow Canal in Neukölln. [16] Opposition groups in East Germany publicized the murder of Chris Gueffroy in an "open letter to the population of East Germany." That fact that his murder was still referred to as a "tragic accident" during the funeral sermon was described as a shameful demonstration of just how steeped in lies East Germany was. [17]



After the Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, Karin Gueffroy left no stone unturned in her search for information about the death of her son. On January 12, 1990 she pressed charges against "persons unknown" with the East German general state prosecutor. [18] After German re-unification the Central Investigating Agency for Governmental and Party Crimes took over the investigation. The Berlin public prosecutor opened the case amidst great public interest on May 27, 1991. Four former East German border guards stood trial for the shooting of Chris Gueffroy. It was the first of many trials against guards who had shot at fugitives at the Berlin Wall and their commanders. The Berlin district court came to its verdict on January 20, 1992: The gunman was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to three and a half years in prison. [19] The other defendants were either given suspended sentences or were acquitted. The court justified the long sentence for the one gunman, Ingo H., with the explanation that he had "revealed a very high degree of callousness and abjection." [20]

The Federal Court of Justice overturned the verdict on March 14, 1994 and referred the case to another chamber of the Berlin district court to be retried. [21] It criticized the Berlin district court for not paying enough consideration to the fact that the gunman stood at the very bottom of the military hierarchy and, unlike the people in positions of responsibility who had yet to be held accountable for their actions, the guards "were to

a certain degree also victims of the border regime." [22] The outcome of this case created a precedent for later verdicts. Almost all the subsequent trials followed the court decision to exonerate the gunmen. Ingo H. was the only defendant in this case to be sentenced to a two year prison term by the Berlin district court in a subsequent trial, a sentence that was commuted to probation. His guard leader was acquitted due to "insufficient evidence of intention to kill."

The shooting of Chris Gueffroy threatened to politically isolate the Communist Party leadership in the spring of 1989. There was no end to the protests and diplomatic measures directed against the order to shoot fugitives at the Wall. On April 3, 1989 the Communist Party general secretary Erich Honecker revoked the order to shoot fugitives at the Wall – the existence of which had always been denied. [23] The shots fired at Chris Gueffroy and Christian G. were the last fatal bullets fired at the Berlin Wall.

A memorial column commemorating Chris Gueffroy was erected at Britzer Zweigkanal in Berlin-Treptow in 2003 in honor of his 35th birthday.

*By Udo Baron/Hans-Hermann Hertle from the website Chronicle of the Wall: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/>*

#### Footnotes:

- [1]On this and the following, see conversations conducted by Udo Baron with Karin Gueffroy, 16.6.2006 und 22.1.2007; see also Roman Grafe, *Deutsche Gerechtigkeit. Prozesse gegen DDR-Grenzschilder und ihre Befehlsgeber*, Berlin, 2004, pp. 12–14.
- [2]Letter from Karin Gueffroy to Hans-Hermann Hertle, 18.1.2009.
- [3]Conversations conducted by Udo Baron with Karin Gueffroy, 16.6.2006 und 22.1.2007.
- [4]See "Urteil des Landgerichts Berlin in der Strafsache gegen Andreas K., Peter Sch., Mike Sch. und Ingo H., Az. (523) 2 Js 48/90 (9/91), vom 20.1.1992," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 16, p. 44.
- [5]On the course of events see *ibid.*, pp. 42 ff.; Karin Gueffroy, *Eine Mutter klagt an*, in: Werner Filmer/Heribert Schwan, *Opfer der Mauer. Die geheimen Protokolle des Todes*, München, 1991, pp. 62–65; "Protokoll der Zeugenvernehmung von Christian G. durch die West-Berliner Polizei, 4.12.1989," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 1, Bl. 84–87; "Vernehmungsprotokoll von Christian G. durch die BVfS Berlin/Untersuchungsabteilung, 6.2.1989," in: BStU, Ast. Berlin, AU 3979/89, Strafakte Bd. 1, Bl. 23–32.
- [6]See "Urteil des Landgerichts Berlin in der Strafsache gegen Andreas K., Peter Sch., Mike Sch. und Ingo H., Az. (523) 2 Js 48/90 (9/91), vom 20.1.1992," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 16, Bl. 45.
- [7]See "Protokoll der Zeugenvernehmung von Christian G. durch die West-Berliner Polizei, 4.12.1989," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 1, Bl. 84.
- [8]See "Urteil des Landgerichts Berlin in der Strafsache gegen Andreas K., Peter Sch., Mike Sch. und Ingo H., Az. (523) 2 Js 48/90 (9/91), vom 20.1.1992," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 16, Bl. 48–57.

- [9]See "Protokoll der Zeugenvernehmung von Christian G. durch die West-Berliner Polizei, 4.12.1989," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 1, Bl. 86.
- [10]See "Strafanzeige des Polizeipräsidenten in Berlin, 6.2.1989," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 1, Bl. 7–8; "Protokoll der Vernehmung eines Augenzeugen durch die West-Berliner Polizei, 16.1.1990," in: *Ibid.*, Bl. 13–14.
- [11]See *Der Tagesspiegel*, 7.2.1989; *Bild-Zeitung*, 7.2.1989; *Berliner Morgenpost*, 7.2.1989.
- [12]"Protokoll des Militär-Oberstaatsanwalts/Abt. IA über ein Gespräch mit Karin Gueffroy am 7.2.1989, 8.2.1989," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 3, Bl. 140–141; see also "Schreiben des Ministers für Staatssicherheit, Erich Mielke, an den Generalsekretär des ZK der SED, Erich Honecker, 25.2.1989," in: BStU, MfS, ZAIG Nr. 15217, Bl. 14–15; "Sachstandsbericht der BVfS Berlin/Abt. IX zur Durchführung schadensbegrenzender Massnahmen im Zusammenhang mit dem Vorkommnis an der Staatsgrenze der DDR zu Berlin (West) am 5.2.1989, 20.2.1989," in: BStU, MfS, ZAIG Nr. 15217, Bl. 78.
- [13]See *Der Tagesspiegel*, 23.2.1989; *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 23.2.1989.
- [14]See "Massnahmeplan des Leiters des MfS/KD Treptow zur Sicherung der Trauerfeier, 22.2.1989," in: BStU, MfS, ZAIG Nr. 15217, Bl. 64–65; "Bericht des Leiters des MfS/KD Treptow über den politisch-operativen Einsatz zur Sicherung der Trauerfeier und Urnenbeisetzung, 23.2.1989," in: *Ibid.*, Bl. 61–62.
- [15]See Karl-Heinz Baum, "Von der stillen Grenze in ein stilles Grab," in: *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 24.2.1989; Monika Zimmermann, "Bewegter Abschied von dem jüngsten Opfer des Schiessbefehls," in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24.2.1989, sowie *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 24.2.1989; *Der Tagesspiegel*, 24.2.1989; *Die Tageszeitung*, 24.2.1989; *Die Welt*, 24.2.1989.
- [16]See "Lagefilm Nr. 54/89 des MfS/ZOS, 23.–24.2.1989," in: BStU, MfS, ZOS Nr. 31, Bd.1, Bl. 6.
- [17]"Offener Brief von Mitgliedern des Arbeitskreises Gerechtigkeit, der Initiative Gruppe Leben, der Arbeitsgruppe Menschenrechte, des Jugendkonventes und der Arbeitsgruppe Friedensdienst an die Bevölkerung der DDR, Leipzig, 15.3.1989," in: Matthias-Domaschk-Archive, Berlin.
- [18]See "Strafanzeige des Anwalts von Karin Gueffroy wegen des Verdachtes der Tötung von Chris Gueffroy am 5.2.1989, 12.1.1990," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 1, Bl. 92.
- [19]See "Urteil des Landgerichts Berlin in der Strafsache gegen Andreas K., Peter Sch., Mike Sch. und Ingo H., Az. (523) 2 Js 48/90 (9/91), 20.1.1992," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 16, pp. 1–4; on this and the following see Roman Grafe, *Die Prozesse wegen der Tötung des Mauerflüchtlings Chris Gueffroy*, in: *Deutschland Archiv* 37 (2004), pp. 977–982.
- [20]"Urteil des Landgerichts Berlin in der Strafsache gegen Andreas K., Peter Sch., Mike Sch. und Ingo H., Az. (523) 2 Js 48/90 (9/91), vom 20.1.1992," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 16, p. 185.
- [21]See "Urteil des Bundesgerichtshof in der Strafsache gegen Andreas K., Peter Sch., Mike Sch. und Ingo H., Az. 5 StR 418/92, vom 25.3.1993," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 18, Bl. 102 ff.; "Urteil des Landgerichts Berlin in der Strafsache gegen Mike Sch. und Ingo H., Az. (527) 2 Js 48/90 Ks (3/93), vom 14.3.1994," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 19, Bl. 59 ff. The verdicts in the Gueffroy case are documented in: Klaus Marxen/Gerhard Werle (eds.), *Gewalttaten an der deutsch-deutschen Grenze*, Bd. 2, 1. Teilband, Berlin, 2002, pp. 5–101.
- [22]See "Urteil des Bundesgerichtshof in der Strafsache gegen Andreas K., Peter Sch., Mike Sch. und Ingo H., Az. 5 StR 418/92, vom 25.3.1993," in: StA Berlin, Az. 2 Js 48/90, Bd. 18, Bl. 140.
- [23]"Niederschrift des Stellvertreters des Chefs und Chefs des Stabes der DDR-Grenztruppen, Generalmajor Teichmann, über die Rücksprache beim Minister für Nationale Verteidigung, i. V. Generaloberst Streletz, am 3.4.1989, 4.4.1989," in: BStU, MfS, HA I Nr. 5753, Bl. 2–5.

# Canada's National Memorial to the Victims of Communism

is about people, families, and the suffering they endured under Communism.

Memorialize the name of a loved one forever on the Memorial's Wall of Remembrance with a donation of \$1,000.

Tell the story of a victim of Communism by buying a brick on the virtual Pathway to Liberty that leads to the Memorial with a donation of \$200.

Donate today at [www.tributetoliberty.ca](http://www.tributetoliberty.ca) or use the mail-in form below.

To contribute to the Memorial to Victims of Communism in Ottawa you can:

**1. Become a Brick Donor - \$200.00**

- With each brick purchased you can submit the story of a victim of Communism, or a message or dedication
- Please email your story, message or dedication to [info@tributetoliberty.ca](mailto:info@tributetoliberty.ca) or include it on a separate piece of paper when you mail this form
- Submissions will be published on the Tribute to Liberty website along with donor's names.  
**Donors who wish to remain anonymous must indicate this in the space provided below**

**2. Donate to the Wall of Remembrance - \$1,000.00**

**3. Donations in any amount are welcome**

---

## Mail-in Contribution Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Donation Amount: \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$200 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**I wish to remain anonymous:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheque payable to: Tribute to Liberty

Please mail in to: Tribute to Liberty, 629 Mill Park Drive, Kitchener, ON, N2P 1V4

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