



Project Update

With on-site construction complete, work on the Memorial sculpture, the Arc of Memory, continues to progress well. Dymech, the metal fabrication company that is creating the sculpture, completed the prototype in early January. This prototype, which is a small section that includes the most technically challenging parts of the sculpture, is necessary to confirm the specifications for the fabrication of the various sculpture components (e.g., tolerances, welding processes and cutting processes) as well as the calibration of the required equipment.

The review of the prototype was successful, allowing Dymech to proceed with fabrication of a full-scale section of the Arc of Memory for a final review in early spring. This review will verify the safety and structural integrity of the Arc of Memory, with fabrication of the rest of the sculpture to follow. In parallel, Dymech has completed programming and is securing the necessary equipment for the task of cutting the thousands of uniquely angled rods and supports that will make up the sculpture. Stay tuned for news about a possible opening ceremony later this year.



Prototype.



Cutting jig.

History Unhidden

Vaclav Havel: Truth and Love Must Prevail Over Lies and Hatred

As the 2023 presidential elections play out in the Czech Republic, it is worth noting that the first president of the Czech Republic (now also known as Czechia) was a man who used sentences over slogans and his words over weapons to secure the escape from communism for central and eastern Europe.

The Memorial to the Victims of Communism, Canada a Land of Refuge, in Ottawa is dedicated to those victims and their families that fought and, in many cases, survived a decades long battle against communism, as Vaclav Havel has shown to be a worthy fight.



Vaclav Havel and the Ljubljana Drama Theatre, 1969.

His story began on October 5, 1936, in Prague, where Havel was born into a family celebrated for their entrepreneurial and cultural accomplishments. For purely political reasons in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, he was not accepted into any post-secondary humanities program and instead began studies at the Czech Technical University in Prague in the faculty of economics.

After dropping out of university and after 2 years of military service (1957-59), Havel found work as a stagehand at a theatre in Prague and began studying dramatic arts.

His work as a playwright allowed him to criticize the communist system in his own “absurdist” style. Success led to more notoriety and attention and then being blacklisted after the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968. He helped found Charter 77 and worked on several dissident initiatives which naturally lead to

his imprisonment, sometimes for up to four years (1979-1983).

It was the establishment of the Civic Forum party that propelled him to widespread attention in Czechoslovakia and the western world, and the road to the presidency of Czechoslovakia from December 1989 to July 1992 after the Velvet Revolution toppled the communist system of control. Many of his policies on independence and post World War II actions were considered very controversial domestically but built him a large following in the west.

Once the Czech Republic and Slovakia were officially declared independent in 1993, Havel returned to politics as President of the Czech Republic from February 1993 to February 2003. Now, almost 20 years later and 12 years after his death on December 18, 2011, many still regard Havel as the man who helped lead a largely peaceful transition of Europe towards western-style democracy.

Vaclav Havel was awarded an Honorary Companion of the Order of Canada on May 8, 2003, for exemplifying the principles that Canadians hold in the highest regard.



Vaclav Havel.

The Czech Republic supports the creation and installation of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and through the efforts of Czech Ambassadors and Consul Generals over the years, that dream is almost a reality. Czechs will be proud to see the names of many victims of communism on the accompanying Wall of Remembrance at the Memorial, and not be surprised to see the name Vaclav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic amongst those names.

Submitted by: Robert Tmej

History Unhidden

Estonian Freedom Fighter Enn Tarto

Estonian Enn Tarto (1938-2021) was only 11 months old when Hitler and Stalin concluded their infamous pact on August 23, 1939, which divided Europe and meant half a century of brutal occupation and repression for the independent Baltic nations. Yet he dedicated his entire life, while free and while imprisoned in the Soviet Gulag, to fighting for the restoration of independence for his homeland, the Republic of Estonia.

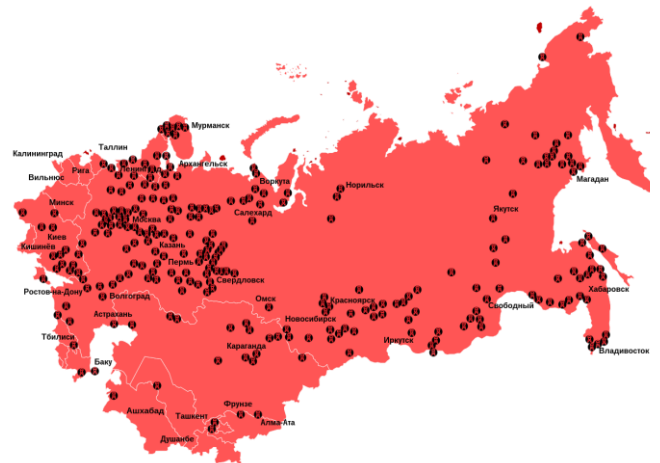


Enn Tarto as a young man.

Tarto and some of his school friends began to organize resistance to the Soviet occupation. They formed the Estonian Youth Brigade, collected and spread Soviet-forbidden literature, printed (using typewriters and carbon copy paper) and distributed leaflets to disclose the lies of communist propaganda.

When news of the Hungarian Revolution reached Estonia in 1956, Tarto led youth demonstrations protesting the brutal repression of the Hungarians. He and seven others were arrested and sent to Soviet prison camps. The Hungarian Republic awarded him

the Officer Cross of the Merit Order after that was re-established in 1991.



Map of the Soviet gulag system.

Over the years Enn Tarto was arrested three different times, serving a total of 14 years (1956-60; 1962-67; 1983-88) in Soviet forced labor camps. However, the Soviet Iron Curtain prevented information about under-ground resistance in the occupied Baltic States and the fate of freedom fighters like Tarto from reaching the West for decades. The terrible conditions he and other prisoners of conscience endured first became known in more detail when a translation of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* appeared in Western bookstores.

Baltic freedom fighters and political prisoners did not want to be called *dissidents* because, unlike Russian human rights activists, their aim was not to reform the Soviet system, but to win back long-lost independence for their illegally occupied homelands.

An important political act by Enn Tarto and 44 other Baltic patriots was the August 1979 Baltic Appeal that they managed to smuggle out to the West. Addressed to the governments of the two German states, the Soviet Union, the signatories of the Atlantic Charter and to Kurt Waldheim (then Secretary General of the UN), the petition called for the elimination of the consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and restoration of independence of the Baltic States. The signatories had correctly pinpointed the fateful date—August 23, 1939—nearly forgotten in the West when two criminal regimes, the Nazis and the Soviet communists, became allies and sealed the fate of a number of independent European states.

Annually the refugee communities in the West also marked August 23 (Black Ribbon Day) with demonstrations. Internally, the immediate response to the Baltic Appeal was more arrests by the Soviet regime. However, on January 13, 1983, led by the efforts of Otto von Habsburg, the European Parliament responded to the Baltic Appeal by passing a resolution which re-affirmed the right of the Baltic States to self-determination.



Enn Tarto.

In January 2023, on the 40th anniversary of that important Resolution, a special memorial plaque was dedicated in the European Parliament building in Brussels.

Enn Tarto was the last Estonian prisoner of conscience to be released from the Gulag. One of the longest continuous protests in Estonia was held in Tallinn across the street from the Soviet Courthouse in the summer and autumn of 1988. People, including previously released political prisoners, carried signs and placards with his picture demanding his release, pointing out that he was being held for acts that were

now permitted under glasnost and perestroika. In September in Washington, a small group of Estonians used street theater to bring his plight to Soviet Foreign Minister Ševardnaze. They explained that Enn Tarto had apparently been forgotten in the Gulag and asked for his release. This was followed by an appeal by 45 US Congressmen. All these efforts contributed to the restoration of his freedom in mid-October 1988. Enn Tarto was welcomed home with open air demonstrations in Tartu and Tallinn.

Enn Tarto played an active role in restoring Estonian civil society and political freedom at the end of 1980 and the beginning of the 1990s. For his life-long efforts, he was awarded many medals and international decorations. In 1990 he was elected to the independent transition-time parliamentary body, the Congress of Estonia, serving as Vice-chairman of its executive body, the Estonian Committee.

Tarto was a member of the Constitutional Assembly from 1991-2 and was elected to the Estonian Parliament three times (1992,1995,1999). He chaired the Estonian Human Rights Institute (1992-95) and participated in the re-founding of the Estonian Defence League. In 1993-2003 he was Chairman of the Elders' Council of the Defence League.



Enn and Piret Tarto.

Tarto was active in various organizations promoting the commemoration of the victims of totalitarian regimes. His widow Piret, two sons, and a daughter continue to keep the legacy of Enn Tarto alive.

Submitted by: Tunne and Mari-Ann Kelam