

## Call communist atrocities what they are

By Oksana Bashuk Hepburn, Citizen Special

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According to recent news reports ("NCC approves monument against oppression," Sept. 11) some board members of the National Capital Commission prefer political correctness to the clear identification of a harsh historic truth: mass murder by communist regimes. This extremely misguided politeness condones heinous crimes against humanity. Silence, in the face of the violations of human rights, let alone astronomical ones, undermines our Canadian values: the right to life and freedom of expression, to name but two.

The story? Called upon to approve a proposed monument to some 100 million victims obliterated by communist governments, some board members were squeamish about the use of "communist" as the culprit ideology of the most bloodthirsty governments in the history of civilization.

The NCC has a decision to make: it can allow the memorial to use "communist" as the perpetrator of crimes against humanity -- greater than those of Nazi Germany. Or, it can omit the link of communism with brutality and, thus, grant absolution for its crimes and bestow the respectability it craves.

The global community, Canada included, did not extend such perverse "courtesy" to the Nazis. It must not accord it to communist regimes.

Stating the identity of the culprits serves to remind of "man's inhumanity to man" and of the promise that such evil must never be repeated. Avoiding the truth encourages despots of any stripe to violate the life and liberties of their people.

If some NCC board members have their way and the monument's raison d'être -- to commemorate victims of communist atrocities -- is dropped, Canada will find itself in the company of dictatorial regimes which punish those who dare to stand up against human rights violations. More, Canada will be lending support to the former KGB officer, now Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who, rather than apologize and distance his government from his country's murderous past and move towards a state committed to the well being of its citizens, is proposing oppressive legislation. Designed to whitewash political crimes, it calls for harsh measures against those exposing Russia's unsavoury history. If it becomes law, and it probably will, government opposition in Russia will be severely hobbled. It will be open season on critics of Russia's communist past.

Whitewashing history has been a longstanding communist preoccupation: eliminate opposition, then eliminate evidence by enforcing silence. We already know what happened to journalist Anna Politkovskaya for exposing Russia's atrocities in Chechnya. She got an execution-style bullet to the back of her head. At least 16 other journalists have been killed in Russia since 2000.

And more whitewashing: The September issue of GQ features an article dealing with the 10th anniversary of the Moscow apartment bombings which killed hundreds. Official Russia blamed the Chechens, but independent investigators found there may have been government involvement. Over the years they have turned silent, even dead.

But the story is not running in the Russian edition or on GQ's website; apparently no foreign editions at all. Are the values of a liberal press taking a back seat to Putin's sensitivities?

Putin will be pleased with the NCC should it decide to be sensitive to communism rather than its victims and disallow the mention of the ideology by name. In so doing the NCC will have Canadians forget the famine-terror Moscow perpetrated to raise capital for communism's "glorious future"; the Khmer Rouge killing fields and the Hungarian and Czech revolutions; the Siberian concentration camps. And in so doing it would allow communist regimes to continue abuses from Tiananmen Square to Cuba to Chechnya.

NCC board members need reminding that the free world's silence about the 10 million starved in Ukraine in 1933 by the communists allowed another dictator to follow suit and gas some six million not 10 years later. Uncensured and unpunished evil perpetrates evil, and justice dies.

Canada must not be party to such perversions at the NCC or elsewhere. Whitewashing serves no one but evil doers.

Regardless of their heinous history, nations need to go forward. This requires confronting past sins. Germany and South Africa have done so. Now it's time for communist states or their successors, in particular the Kremlin with its bloody Soviet past, to do likewise. Canadian human rights values -- life, freedom of speech, good government -- stand above misguided sensitivity towards evil. Identifying the perpetrator on a monument dedicated to the victims of communism in the capital of a global human rights leader like Canada is the right thing to do.

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