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Don't spare the feelings of communists

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The ignorant beliefs of the few are utterly insignificant before the misery of the many who suffered in their crushing grip, as the National Capital Commission (NCC) should realize.

The Crown corporation, which oversees federal land and buildings around Ottawa, is holding up plans for a Memorial to the Victims of Totalitarian Communism out of concern that it might offend present-day Canadian communists. Evidently, this is one group of bureaucrats in urgent need of a history lesson.

Tribute to Liberty, the group behind the memorial, has already added "totalitarian" to the intended wording to appease federal naysayers, but is now facing further difficulties over what NCC members allege is a "provocative" reference to communism. The NCC wants to excise any reference to a specific ideology from the memorial and dedicate it to the victims of totalitarianism in general, watering the project down into bland nothingness. One commission member, who appears never to have cracked a history book to inspect the contents, even suggested Canadians are out of line for criticizing communist regimes because of the officially sanctioned internment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. The NCC could not be more wrong.

Communism was the major ideological blight of the 20th century, a repressive, unfeeling and savage system which, through its brutal objectification of the human condition, caused more than 100 million deaths in the space of a few short decades. The list of Communism's crimes includes some of the worst tragedies in history.

Almost two million Cambodians were tortured and murdered (some simply for wearing glasses) during the 1975-1979 reign of the Khmer Rouge (the Red Khmers) as Pol Pot and his cadres attempted to restart Cambodian society on communist principles.

Millions of Chinese died from famine during the 1958-1961 Great Leap Forward, a bungled attempt at Communist agricultural and industrial reorganization instigated by Mao Zedong. Many other millions were murdered for simply holding differing views from communism. In total, Mao Zedong killed 70 million of his countrymen, during peacetime.

Possibly the worst communist criminal of them all, Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, left a butcher's bill that runs into the tens of millions. His relentless paranoia fuelled repeat purges, mass starvation, ferocious internal security and gulags, which destroyed generations and fed off the minds and bodies even of those tasked with keeping the slaughterhouse running. But, today, the 20th century's most ruthless criminal is lionized in Russia as a man who got things done, while his chief henchmen are commemorated on stamps and statues. There is even a brand of Russian cigarettes, Belomorkanal, named after a prison camp where 100,000 died.

That the NCC should wish to take part in the sin of forgetting by catering to the tender feelings of Communists today is unthinkable disgusting. The memorial should go forward, minus the adjective "totalitarian." As any number of victims could tell the NCC, there is no other kind of Communism.

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