



Project Update

Although the Memorial was inaugurated, on very short notice, on December 11, 2024, the Memorial has not been fully completed.

The Wall of Remembrance names are still covered. Many donors and supporters who want their loved ones names displayed are very disappointed not to be able to see the names displayed.

Quite a few of the names have stories of what they went through as victims of communism. These are stories that people need to read to understand how evil communism was and still is.

The Tribute to Liberty board will work with the government to resolve outstanding issues.

Watch an interview with Tribute to Liberty Board Chair Ludwik Klimkowski about the Memorial here:

<https://ept.ms/4kcUZBi>



Photos from Latvian Deportations Commemoration at the Memorial—see story on next page.

Cursed Soldiers Commemorated at Memorial

On the occasion of Cursed Soldiers National Remembrance Day, Ambassador Witold Dzielski, Defence Attaché Paweł Podgórný, Consul Natali Kubik together with representatives of the Canadian Polish Congress and the Polish Combatants Association in Canada laid wreaths at the Memorial to the Victims of Communism in Ottawa.

The Cursed Soldiers were members of the Polish underground resistance who fought against Soviet oppression after WWII. Their struggle for an independent Poland came at a great cost, as many were imprisoned, tortured, and executed by the Communist regime. Today, we honor their bravery, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment to freedom.



Latvian Deportations Commemorated at Memorial

On March 25, 2025, for the first time, the mass deportations of Latvians was commemorated at the Memorial to the Victims of Communism in Ottawa.

On March 25, 1949, the Soviet occupying power in Latvia forcibly deported more than 40,000 people, including 11,000 children, to Siberia. The fates of many Latvian families were irreparably damaged.

Journey to Freedom Day Commemorated at Memorial

Wednesday April 30, 2025, marked 50 years since the end of the Vietnam War. To the Vietnamese Canadian community, it was a day of commemoration, reflection, as well as a day of advocacy.

Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees fled their country as a result of political persecution following the Communist takeover at the end of the war. Starting in April 1975, and thanks to Canadian efforts and generosity, tens of thousands were able to resettle in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2015, Canada's Parliament recognized April 30th as Journey to Freedom Day.

This year, on April 30th, the Vietnamese Canadian Federation held a ceremony on Parliament Hill to mark Journey to Freedom Day. Taking part were about 300 people from the GTA, Ottawa and Montreal, as well as other locations.

A protest was also held in front of the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, at 55 MacKay Street. And at 4 pm, a ceremony was held at the Memorial to the Victims of Communism. The highlight of the ceremony at the Memorial to the Victims of Communism was a prayer led by Catholic priest Nguyen Huu Le. Father Nguyen Huu Le himself had been imprisoned for 13 years for his opposition to Communist rule in Vietnam, and he had fled Vietnam along with other boat people in 1989, to resettle in New Zealand. His name was among those submitted to the Memorial.

April 30th is not only a day of commemoration but also a day of advocacy for human rights. Vietnam is now one of Canada's most important trading partners among South-east Asian (ASEAN) countries, but politically, the country remains a one-party state ruled by the Communist Party.

Vietnam continues to systematically violate the right to free expression by arresting and imprisoning citizens who peacefully voice their opinions. Vietnam's repression of civil society has impeded participation from true NGOs in various spheres, including the environment and labour rights.

The Vietnamese Canadian community therefore called upon Canada to hold Vietnam accountable for tangible and verifiable progress in its human rights record.





History Unhidden

Echoes of a Soviet Spring: 50 Years Later

Spring of 1978 was warm and bright, and the air was sweet with the scent of cherry blossoms, tulips, and jasmine. These blooms softened the dullness of our oddly shaped, five-story building. According to city legend, it had been built by German prisoners of Second World War in Baku, Azerbaijan. In the kitchen my parents and I were having a heated discussion. I was five years old and determined to participate in the May 1st rally, International Workers' Day, despite the fact that my shoes were falling apart. My parents had other ideas. Eventually, we reached a compromise: I could go to the rally wearing slippers, held together on my feet with a piece of elastic.

What a joy it was to be among the crowd, holding a big red balloon while sitting on my father's shoulders! The sea of people quickly swallowed our little family, moving in one eager wave and shouting, "Peace, Labour, May!"

and "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" I knew I was living in the best country in the world. Happiness was inflating me like air inflates a balloon.



In another five years I was marching with my classmates after class to perfect what our teachers called *stroyevaya podgotovka* — a skill to march together as a military unit. Our stomachs were rumbling because of hunger, we were tired and thirsty, but marching continued for several hours. Years later, I learned that we had been marching to a fascist song. We were supervised by Lenin's portraits everywhere, like the Orwellian Big Brother they looked at us from hallways and classroom walls. Not just his photographs, but also as a plaster, metal, granite sculptures sternly stared at us from city squares, parks, at the entrances of government organizations.



When I was around fifteen, during the height of *perestroika*, I began to make sense of the stories my grandmother told me — stories of people dying from hunger on the streets of their Ukrainian village in the Volga Region during the Soviet famine of 1930–1933. My family buried two young daughters who starved to death, while two others — my grandmother and her sister — survived. They lost their Ukrainian language, their cultural tradition, and their identities to become soviet citizens. Despite the communist propaganda efforts, it became clear to me that our soviet society was, in fact, not a victim,

but an oppressive regime resulted in deaths of millions of innocent people.

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. However, it seems to me that this intergenerational trauma never truly stopped acting. It's like a World War II-era bomb lying silently under layers of sand and clay — or even beneath a concrete foundation. It slowly poisons the space around it. Or rather — it was lying there, until 2022, until Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Great-grandchildren are not responsible for the actions of their great-grandfathers; they weren't even alive when the crimes were committed. But today's Russians have already committed crimes of their own.

The absence of repentance leads to the same behavioural patterns being locked away in the unconscious — the same habitual ways of dealing with reality. Tragically, the reflection — the hard work of examining the past — has never taken place in modern Russia. A slow decay of soviet society should have been brought into the light, examined, described, named, and ultimately judged. Even if the perpetrators can no longer be punished because they are no longer alive, their names must still be spoken, and their actions must be recorded. How can we mourn those whose lives can no longer be restored, whose faces are lost forever? Whose lives were too short to be remembered? All I know about my grandmother's sisters are their names — and the name of the village where they lost their lives.

Moreover, power in Russia has never evolved into a truly democratic system, at least a two-party structure. The country has never overcome the near-divine image of its top official: the tsar became the Soviet leader, and the Soviet leader was eventually rebranded as the president of Russia. The government control has never lost its grip on people, maybe only weakened during one decade, from the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 until 2000, when Vladimir Putin emerged as an unknown KGB officer eventually developed into an aggressor.

Now, I feel that my native Russian language makes me feel like a German soldier captured by the Soviet Army, forever marked by unspeakable atrocities. But today, it is not Auschwitz or Buchenwald that haunts us, but the massacre in Bucha, destruction of Bakhmut, tortured Ukrainian POVs. The list of the war crimes committed by Russian troops is endless. The word "Russian" has become — again, since World War II — a terrifying word I picture it as an invisible stain, suffocating smell, and sharp sting of shame.

A couple of days ago I accidentally came across photographs on the Internet: mothers of newborns dress them

in miniature military uniform posing for pictures to commemorate Victory Day on May 9th. In May 2025, Russia is going to celebrate a jubilee: 80 years since the Great Victory in World War II. Of course, there are no public discussions about the role of the USSR in starting World War II, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. It's not a tragic, solemn, or mournful day — it's a pompous bacchanalia that glorifies real violence, mass murders, while a merciless war continues in Ukraine. These are the same manipulations of human emotion, children dressed in military colours, and authoritarian control over minds. Only this time, I am not a five-year-old child. I'm in my fifties, and my heart is filled with grief and anger.

Submitted by Yulia Podina

History Unhidden

The Life and Struggles of a Vietnamese Dissident in Exile

Despite being forced into exile in 2018, dissident blogger Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh continues to write about social justice and human rights issues concerning Vietnam.



More popularly known as Me Nam or "Mother Mushroom," she gained recognition for her posts on environmental pollution and police abuse. She was arrested in October 2016 and subjected to eight months of solitary confinement before being sentenced to ten years in prison in June 2017. After two years and seven days of incarceration, she was released on the condition that she would immediately leave the country.

As an exiled blogger in the United States, Mother Mushroom consistently demands justice and accountability from Vietnamese authorities.

She has won numerous awards, including the 2017 International Women of Courage Award and the 2018 International Press Freedom Awards. Global Voices interviewed her through email about her life in exile, the challenges she faced as an activist and writer, and the recent incident of transnational repression involving Vietnam and China.

Mong Palatino (MP): Why did you choose “Mother Mushroom” as your pen name?

Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh (NNNQ): I chose the name ‘Mother Mushroom’ (Mẹ Nấm) in 2006 when I first began blogging. ‘Mother Mushroom’ simply meant being the mother of a little girl whose nickname at home was ‘Mushroom.’ I started the blog as a kind of diary for my daughter, hoping that one day she would be able to read my thoughts and the story of my pregnancy. That’s how it all began.

Then one day, while waiting for my checkup at a hospital, I witnessed a nurse shouting at an ethnic minority woman. When I asked why she was being treated so unfairly, the staff turned and scolded me too. That moment changed everything. My personal diary, which started with tender reflections on pregnancy, became a space where I began writing about social injustice and human rights issues I had never noticed before. It was a shift — from a mother’s story to a citizen’s voice.

MP: How has being exiled affected your life and your advocacy as a writer?

NNNQ: Exile has been both a liberation and a wound. It freed me from the constant fear of being arrested or watched, but it also tore me away from my homeland, my family, and my native language. As an activist, exile sharpens your voice — because you no longer live under the immediate threat of imprisonment. But it’s also deeply challenging, because your audience remains inside the country, still living under fear.

Everything I write now carries the weight of those who stayed behind. I used to write as a mother and a citizen. Now, I write as a witness to injustice and as a bridge between those inside and outside Vietnam.

MP: What challenges have you faced as an exiled writer and activist?

NNNQ: Isolation is one of the biggest challenges. Being far from the people whose stories I want to tell means I rely heavily on digital communication, which is often limited or monitored. There’s also the emotional burden — and more importantly, the reality of being just one small

voice against the state-controlled media machine.

As an exiled activist, I constantly ask myself: Am I doing enough? Am I amplifying the voices of others — or unintentionally overshadowing them? That balance is a constant struggle.

In a context where activists in Vietnam face threats of fines, imprisonment, and prosecution, exile becomes the government’s most effective strategy to neutralize dissent. And yet, I find myself proving them wrong: they may have expelled me from the country, but they failed to silence my voice.



MP: You recently wrote about transnational repression involving Vietnam and China. What are the implications for local activists and writers?

NNNQ: The coordinated repression targeting Tibetan spiritual leader Tulku Hungkar Dorje and Vietnamese monk Minh Tue is a wake-up call. It shows that authoritarian regimes like Vietnam and China are not just suppressing dissent within their borders — they are extending their control across countries.

For local activists and writers, this means that safe spaces for expression are shrinking, even in exile. It also highlights the urgent need for transnational solidarity. What happens to a Tibetan monk in Ho Chi Minh City is not separate from what happens to a Vietnamese blogger in Bangkok. And more importantly, in a world where political and economic shifts are eroding human rights values globally, I am seeking to connect with dispersed communities everywhere — small but resilient — who are still willing to stand and support each other. This is not an easy fight. But it’s one we cannot abandon.

This article was written by Mong Palatino and appeared in [Global Voices](#) on May 8, 2025.