

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? A memorial that should be welcomed

In 1997, a group of noted European academics published 'The Black Book of Communism,' which outlines in considerable detail the brutality of Communist regimes throughout the world.

Producing a chart covering such Communist regimes as China, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, North Korea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Cuba, and others, the authors calculated that close to 100 million people died as a result of these repressive governments, about four times as many as attributed to Germany's sadistic Adolf Hitler.

This is not the sort of thing those of the left side of the political/academic structure want to hear. Indeed, during the brutal and murderous reigns of Stalin and Mao, many left-leaning academics in the West ? while ever ready to condemn the dreaded U.S. for its sins ? pooh-poohed the notion of Communist bloodletting as mainly western propaganda.

Indeed, Walter Duranty, the New York Times Moscow bureau chief from 1922 to 1936, won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the Soviet Union and dismissed stories about Stalin's deliberate starvation of the Ukraine as 'an exaggeration or malignant propaganda.' We would do well to remember this history, which had a direct impact upon many Canadians who were alive at the time and their descendants today, which is why Prime Minister Stephen Harper, much to the chagrin of the intellectual left, is pushing ahead with a monument to the victims of communism to be built on a large tract of land near the Supreme Court building (not right next to it as its opponents falsely claim.)

As a country, Canada has quite properly taken steps to recognize the victims of several historical atrocities ? the Holocaust Memorial, for example, will also be in Ottawa ? so you would think a memorial to the victims of communism would be a welcome member of that pantheon.

But, oh no.

The very thought of it prompted Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, after hearing of the memorial, to wonder aloud why there was no monument to the victims of capitalism, as if there is a moral relevance between the two systems. Or, as veteran politico Gerry Nichols wrote, 'Apparently, May doesn't realize that the victims of communism were men, women and children, while the 'victims' of capitalism were the Edsel, Beta tapes and New Coke.'

Even Supreme Court Justice Beverley McLachlin, who has no business getting involved in a political dispute ? although she and the majority of her left-leaning justices are doing all they can to thwart any laws approved by the elected Conservative government ? fired off a note to Public Works complaining that the memorial 'could send the wrong message within the judicial precinct, unintentionally conveying a sense of bleakness and brutality that is inconsistent with a space dedicated to the administration of justice.'

Oh please. Of course it conveys 'a sense of bleakness and brutality.' That's the point. And the fact that it is near the Supreme Court actually acts as a strong reminder how fortunate we are in this country to have a system of laws ? despite McLachlin's efforts to politicize them ? which the victims of communism had no recourse to.

It is difficult to know what Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau actually thinks of it ? or anything else for that matter ? but one assumes he can't be pleased having held China up as the country he admires most for its governmental efficiency. It is efficient in many ways, that's for sure. When China was awarded the Olympics, for example, government officials went into various neighborhoods and gave people 10 days to leave ? with no compensation, no appeal ? to make room for the various Olympic venues. Trudeau, whose father also admired various communist regimes and took his kids to visit them on occasions, may applaud such efficiency, but the millions of Canadians whose background, either directly or indirectly, was affected by communism likely wouldn't agree with him. Even Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson, complained that it could be 'a blight' on the Supreme Court, whose 'front lawn' is a tourist attraction. Well, not exactly. There are strict laws about how close the public can get to the Supreme Court, so don't be planning a picnic on the front lawn any time soon.

Harper, in defending the monument, argues sensibly that it is needed to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. 'Whatever it calls itself ? Nazism, Marxist-Leninism, today, terrorism ? they all have one thing in common: the destruction, the end, of human liberty. My fear is this: as we move further into the 21st century, Canadians, especially new generations, will forget or will not be taught the lessons had learned and the victories hard earned over the last 100 years ? That's why Canada needs this monument.'

Indeed it is.

