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Is Communism Dead?

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LEE EDWARDS, Ph.D.: It is a grave failing of our age that the full extent of Communism's inhumanity to man is not known.

Who knows that the Soviet Union murdered 20 million people through mock trials, purges, famines, and the infamous Gulag?

Who knows that Mao Zedong and the other Chinese Communist leaders have slaughtered an estimated 50 million people through the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen massacre, and the Chinese version of the Gulag—the Laogai?

Who knows that Fidel Castro has executed thousands of political prisoners since coming to power in 1959 and continues to silence any open opposition to his rule?

Who knows that the Communist plague has exacted a death toll surpassing that of all the wars of the 20th century combined?

This tragic oversight must be corrected. A Memorial to the more than 100 million victims of Communism must be built—and it will be. Groundbreaking for the Memorial, located on Capitol Hill just three blocks from here, is scheduled for next month. *[Editor's Note: The groundbreaking is scheduled for September 27, 2006.]*

The Memorial will feature a 10-foot-high bronze replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue erected by Chinese students in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989 and then destroyed by Chinese Communist tanks. The statue was based on our own Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.

Talking Points

- Once asked who were the victims of Communism, a former occupant of the Soviet Gulag replied, "Everyone who lived in the 20th century was a victim of Communism."
- Today, 50 years after Stalin died, the remaining Communist dictatorships such as Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, and North Korea perpetuate the Leninist legacy of fear and intimidation.
- One aspect of that legacy directly affects every American today. The U.S.S.R. and its proxies armed and built the international terrorist networks of the 1960s through the 1980s. The states supporting international terrorism are mainly former Soviet client regimes.
- If the Communist-coordinated terrorists had been squashed or had never existed, in all likelihood the world would not be plagued by the present-day terrorism of Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Qaeda, and the other violent organizations that commit mass murder in the name of God.

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On the front pedestal of the Memorial statue will be the words: “To the more than one hundred million victims of Communism and to those who love liberty.”

On the back pedestal will be the words: “To the freedom and independence of all captive nations and peoples.”

These words will serve to remind visitors that one-fifth of the world’s population still lives, and not by their choice, under Communism.

You and I are blessed to live in a free society. We have never had to worry about a knock on the door in the middle of the night and the secret police dragging us from our home. We have never had to endure the horrors of so-called reeducation camps that break the bodies and minds of dissidents. We have never seen families, communities, whole cities, eliminated at the order of a cold-blooded tyrant.

But for many millions of people over the past century these horrors were a daily fact of life.

Once asked who were the victims of Communism, a former occupant of the Soviet Gulag replied, “Everyone who lived in the 20th century was a victim of Communism.”

As Anne Applebaum, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Gulag*, wrote, mere statistics cannot reflect “the cumulative impact of Stalin’s repressions on the life and health of whole families.”

Consider: A man was tried and shot as an “enemy of the people.” His wife was taken to a camp as a “member of an enemy’s family.” His children grew up in orphanages and joined criminal gangs. His mother died of stress and grief. His cousins and aunts and uncles cut off all contact with one another in order not to be tainted. Fear weighed heavily on those left behind, even when they did not die.

Today, 50 years after Stalin died, the remaining Communist dictatorships perpetuate the Leninist legacy of fear and intimidation, as you will hear from our distinguished panelists this afternoon.

There is one aspect of the Leninist legacy that directly affects every American today.

It is a fact, documented by the terrorism expert Michael Waller, that the U.S.S.R. and its proxies

armed and built the international terrorist networks of the 1960s through the 1980s. The states supporting international terrorism are mainly former Soviet client regimes, including Cuba, North Korea, and Syria under the Assad family. It is a fact that Soviet sponsorship of Yasser Arafat and the PLO allowed Moscow to gain influence over terrorist groups like Hezbollah.

If the Communist-coordinated terrorists had been squashed or had never existed, Dr. Waller concludes, in all likelihood the world would not be plagued by the present-day terrorism of Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Qaeda, and the other violent organizations that commit mass murder in the name of God.

Beyond dispute, the specter of Communism still haunts the world—even in America’s largest city. A popular nightclub in New York City’s East Village is the KGB Bar. The place is jammed nearly every night and especially on Sundays when writers read from their latest works under the club’s symbol—the Hammer and Sickle. How long, I wonder, would a New York nightclub last if its name were The Gestapo and there was a large swastika on the wall?

Clearly, there is an urgent need for a Memorial to the victims of Communism. And Washington is the right city for such a Memorial because this city offers so many reminders of the history of our nation and the world.

In the past decade, we have seen the dedication of a memorial museum about the Jewish Holocaust as well as a memorial to the veterans of World War II. There are fitting tributes to the men and women who died in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

The Memorial to the victims of Communism will be a key part of this historical picture and will help illustrate why we fought and won the Cold War.

Visitors to the Memorial will remember the Hungarian patriots killed by Soviet troops and tanks in 1956. They will remember those who struggled for more than a quarter of a century to escape the concrete and barbed wire of the Berlin Wall. They will remember the brave “boat people” of Vietnam and Cuba who risked everything to gain freedom.

We cannot, we must not allow history to forget those who died and are still dying under Communism.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters understand what is at stake. They understand that history must not be forgotten lest it be repeated. They keep reminding the world of the Holocaust, crying, “Never again!”

As Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, said last week here in Washington, “What is the alternative? Not to tell the story? To let truth vanish? To let truth disappear together with the victims?” There can be only one answer to such questions.

We must remember and we must memorialize the sacrifice of more than 100 million victims of Communism so that never again will nations and peoples permit so evil a tyranny to terrorize the world.

—Lee Edwards, Ph.D., is Distinguished Fellow in Conservative Thought at The Heritage Foundation, and Chairman of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation.

FRANK CALZON: I think it was Martin Luther King who said that all of us were likely to forget our enemies, but it is very difficult to forget some of our friends who remained silent when terrible things were happening. And that’s why I appreciate the invitation and the work of Lee Edwards, and I am particularly honored to be here with Harry Wu and Paul Goble to talk here today.

Cuba remains a Communist country. Despite Fidel Castro’s illness, little has changed. Cuba has the characteristics of both a traditional right wing and traditional Latin American dictatorship, and imposed upon that is the whole baggage of repression, despair, economic inefficiency of the Communist model.

The model we’re looking at in Cuba today is not new. There’s an island near Cuba—the Spanish called it Española (Hispaniola); the Dominican Republic and Haiti share the island. In both of those nations, in the 20th century, there were efforts to keep a dictatorship in place under a family. So whether it was Trujillo or Papa Doc, the idea was that once he either died or something happened to him, then somebody else in the family could step up and take control. Castro, like Papa Doc, is President for Life.

The model that Cubans would like to see—Cubans in Cuba and the almost 2 million Cubans

who live abroad—is a kind of transition that the Czechs were fortunate to have. The idea of a peaceful, bloodless transition to democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, multiple political parties. The transition that Fidel Castro and his brother Raul would like to have is the kind of transition that we saw in North Korea after the death of the dictator and the assumption of power by his son.

I am a little optimistic about Cuba because, while North Korea is right next to China, Cuba is 90 miles away from the United States, and perhaps the Cuban situation is a little bit more open than the North Korean situation.

This reminds me of a little story that Harry Wu told me in Geneva at one time. When I worked for Freedom House we were honored to sponsor a couple of events in which Harry talked about the despair, the repression, the yearning for freedom of his people. Harry used to say to me, “You know, Frank, look at it this way: the dictators open up their window a little bit and the flies fly in.” And he said, “We are those flies. We are the flies who get in there with the publications, with the letters, with the books, with the short wave radios, with a message of hope.”

I always feel that it’s terribly important for any of us who defend freedom, whether it is in Cuba or in Burma or in any part of the world, to acknowledge the fact that the struggle for freedom is universal. If you are in favor of freedom in Burma, then you have to be in favor of freedom in Tibet or in Cuba. You’re not simply against a dictator of the right or a dictator of the left, but like Harry Wu has said, and Vaclav Havel has repeated, and Lech Walesa has said, we are in favor of the human spirit. And that’s why the dictators think of us in the terms that they do.

A dictatorship of any kind always is based, not only in fear and terror, but in trying to label those who think differently as less than human. We saw that, of course, in Nazi Germany, and in some fashion we saw that in South Africa. Some people will remind me that something similar to that happened in the American South, not too long ago, where human beings were given a label. Those who fight for freedom in China, I’m sure, are depicted in very negative terms. In Cuba’s case, Cubans who disagree with Mr. Castro, are “lackeys of the United

States,” “agents of the CIA,” “terrorists,” “bootlickers of the Yankees,” “Gusanos” (gusano is a worm that you step on). So, you can see that it is easier for someone to beat up some one who is different. Maybe that different person at one time was Jewish, maybe another time was Black. Today in Burma and China and Belarus and Cuba, the victims are folks who dare to say what most people around them are only willing to think. Their struggle, their fight, is not only important for them, but it’s important for all of us.

I remember visiting Havel in Prague many years ago. There was an important contract in play and the Chinese government was very upset about some things that President Havel had said. Some of the practical people in Prague were telling the Czech president, “You’ve got to be careful about what you say because this could mean losing millions of dollars for Czech companies.” Luckily, the Czech president felt that although commercial interests are important, the national interest of his people, of his nation, were well beyond whether a company had some profit or not.

In Cuba’s case, the idea of trading with Cuba continues to be a matter of discussion in Washington. I think there’s a little confusion about this whole discussion. Most people do not know that American companies can now trade with Cuba. American companies sell hundreds of millions of dollars in grain to Cuba. The restriction is that Cuba/Castro needs to pay for it. I think we all should be in favor of that, because if that restriction was not in place, then the American taxpayers would have to pay for that.

In Paris and in other places there are long lists of Castro’s creditors who have not been paid since 1986, before the collapse of the Berlin Wall. And what some American companies would like to see is for credits, export insurance to facilitate this trade, which as Condoleezza Rice has said, is not really trade with Cuba, it’s simply trade with Castro. When an American company trades, say, with Costa Rica, with Mexico, with Belgium, they trade with other folks like them. They have a company, have a business. In Cuba every business is through the government, through the state. As in the case of China, labor conditions are horrible. Most Cubans

get paid around \$15 a month. Some companies pay Castro \$10,000 a year for a worker. And then Castro pays the workers there an equivalent of \$10 or \$15 a month.

I would like to urge you to go beyond the slogans and look a little bit into the discussion of Cuba, because most companies that do business in Cuba believe that they go there and they acquire a customer. Castro doesn’t believe that he is doing business. Castro believes that he’s purchasing influence so that anybody who deals in Cuba (I assume the same happens in China) then becomes a lobbyist, an advocate of the dictatorship here in Washington. This business interest then would go to the Congress and say, if you pass a resolution on human rights on this country, then our business interests will be in peril. That’s an aspect that we need to take into account.

Finally, I would like to suggest to all of you that while it is easy to take for granted the freedoms that you have, you want to do what folks like you are not allowed to do in places like China, or places like Cuba, places like Belarus, or Burma. To begin with I haven’t seen any of you looking back to see who’s sitting behind you, or if somebody’s waiting outside the door. When you get out of this meeting, nobody’s going to tell you that you’re going to be expelled from school, or your parents will lose their job.

This is what I would like you to do. After you leave here today, why not write a “Letter to the Editor”? I think if the *Washington Post* were to receive 50 letters today, at least one or two of them would probably get published. Why not send a note to your Congressman—you are probably from various states—saying, I heard Harry Wu at Heritage today and he spoke about the harvesting of organs. This is the unspeakable practice that takes place in China where people who are condemned to be executed are held until their heart or one of their organs is needed, and then they are killed so that one of those organs could be pulled out and give to somebody else.

That’s the nature of the regimes that we are dealing with. It is easy to talk in terms of geopolitics, or corporate profits, of not paying attention to these “nations” that were taken over by the Russians. They used to say that the captive nations were to remain

captive forever—but they did not. We hope with your help the other captive nations, China, Belarus, Burma, and others, also will be free one day.

—*Frank Calzon is Executive Director of the Center for a Free Cuba.*

PAUL GOBLE: President Bush is absolutely right in saying that we live at a time where freedom has been spreading to many places where it has never been seen before. But Ambassador Lev Dobriansky is also correct to note that this spread neither has been nor is now without much struggle and many reversals. Unfortunately, in talking about the Russian Federation of today, both reversals and the need to struggle against them are very much in evidence.

First, there are still three peoples named in the original 1959 Captive Nations Week resolution that remain dominated by Moscow despite the wishes of their populations: the North Caucasus, the Middle Volga (Idel-Ural), and the lands of the Cossacks. Not only do these areas remain under the thumb of many who often are the same people who ran things in Communist times, but they are in many cases being subjected to greater pressure today than they were a decade ago.

Second, if we are serious about the original definition of “captive” nations, there are now more of them—that is, more people living with less freedom and under the control of those they did not choose—than there were a decade ago. For all too many peoples in the Russian Federation today, there is less freedom of religion, less freedom of speech, less freedom of assembly, and less freedom to choose their rulers than there was even at the end of the Soviet period.

Third, all too often we focus only on the more than 100 million people that Communist regimes killed. We cannot and must not ever forget them. But we also need to remember the other victims, whose hearts, minds, and souls were destroyed by Communist dictatorships but who nonetheless continue to survive and in some cases to rule. We did not insist on decommunization of the former Soviet states as we did on denazification in Germany after 1945. As a result, most of these countries are currently run by people who might have been in

power even if 1989 and 1991 had never happened. And many in the populations of these countries remain infected by the kind of evil that Captive Nations Week was intended to remind us of.

Consequently, it is too early to celebrate the triumph of Captive Nations Week. There have been victories. But we have not won through everywhere. All too often, we have declared victory—in the Russian Federation a decade ago and in Georgia and Ukraine more recently—and only later discovered that such triumphs, however sweet and valuable, were not only incomplete but hollow.

Ideologists near the Kremlin understand that, and consequently, they pay attention to this 48th commemoration of Captive Nations Week. It is time that we did as well—and shift from celebrating the triumphs of the past to facing up to the challenges we need to meet now and in the future.

—*Paul Goble is formerly with the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.*

HARRY WU: In a meeting with the Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal 10 years ago, he said, “The ideology of Communism is not a crime; however, its implementation is a crime.” We are here today to remember the victims of Communism and to remind the international community that its crimes are alive and well today. The evidence is ever present in China, Cuba, and many former Soviet republics. The rulers and time periods are different, but the ideologies, the tools of oppression, and the end goals are the same: to eliminate the enemies of the regime to retain power.

The first step is to decide who are the regime’s enemies, to publicly identify individuals to work toward their elimination. A common tool of oppression has been labor and death camps; major examples are the Soviet Gulag, the Nazi concentration camps, and China’s Laogai camps. Polish Jew Raphael Lemkin coined the term “genocide” to describe Nazi Germany’s widespread massacre. The definition of genocide as put forth in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is “acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group,” not limited to killing,

but also including mental harm and restrictions on people's lives. Since 1951, genocide has been used to describe the events in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Communist regimes have generated their own brand of genocide that I call "classicide." The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) actions are fundamentally the same as genocide, and the atrocities committed have not only been widespread and long term, the methods and styles used have been unusually brutal. These are facts that the international community cannot forget or ignore.

According to Revolutionary Communist theory, society is composed of two groups of people: the exploiting class and the exploited class. In China, although the CCP seized power in 1949, the Revolution was far from over. All people and things representing the old regime had to be thoroughly destroyed via a class struggle. From 1927 to 1976 the CCP began by grouping people according to economic status. In the countryside, you were either of the landlord and rich peasant class or the middle and poor peasant class. In the cities, you were either bourgeoisie and capitalist or working class. Those who had the misfortune of being members of the landlord or bourgeoisie classes, even children, were treated as second-class citizens.

In the countryside, many thousands of landlords and rich peasants were beaten to death during the "Land Reform Movement," from 1927 to 1952. The CCP confiscated land and denied this group access to education and employment opportunities. In the cities, those in the exploiting class were stripped of their possessions. Those in the exploiting class were forced to do hard labor in order to "obey the teachings of the party, thoroughly remold themselves, and reform their thinking." On August 18, 1966, in Beijing, Mao Zedong began the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution urging the junior cadres of the Communist Party, who formed the "Red Guards" to "make revolution." The Guards began harassing people in schools and eventually took to the streets to eliminate what was left of the exploiting class.

One incident during the Cultural Revolution in Beijing's Daxing County epitomizes the essence of classicide in China. After the Red Guards obtained records to find out every individual's "class back-

ground," they seized those from the landlord and rich peasant classes and slaughtered them one by one. A total of 168 people were killed including a 38-day-old baby. The massacre was sanctioned by the CCP and was carried out while the Guards were waving the little red book, *Revolutionary Quotations of Mao Zedong*. Afterwards, the Red Guards celebrated, declaring that Daxing County was now a "Red Proletarian Revolution Paradise"—meaning free of class enemies.

I mention this incident not merely because it was an extreme case that happened only once. On the contrary, what happened in Daxing County happened all over China to innocent people and children. Between August 18 and the end of September 1966, 1,714 of the "five black elements" were beaten, many to death, had their homes searched and their property confiscated, and were "swept out the door" and sent off to the Laogai. There are no statistics as to how many people were affected as the entire truth has yet to be revealed. Some research has shown that around the time of 1949, there were around 10 to 15 million members of the landlord and rich peasant classes nationwide. By the 1970s, after the Cultural Revolution, only 10 to 15 percent remained of this number. What is more alarming is that, as of yet, no one has been put on trial for these crimes.

From the CCP's inception to the late 1970s, an individual's class background determined his quality of life. When a criminal judgment was made, class background was a key deciding factor. For example, if someone to prevent starvation stole 20 kilograms of corn from a People's Commune, his sentence would differ depending on his class. A member of the landlord class would be punished for a political crime of "damaging the people's commune and being hostile to the socialist system," while a member of the peasant class would have committed the mistake of "going down the wrong road because of being influenced by the exploiting class." In the 1980s the CCP made new policies in an attempt to remove the labels of "landlord" and "rich peasant." However, this gesture was meaningless as nearly all members of these classes, especially in the countryside, had been exterminated during the preceding 30 years. Moreover, although none of the major figures involved in the Tianan-

men Square demonstrations was a member of the “former” bourgeoisie class, the CCP labeled the incident a “bourgeoisie disturbance.”

Like the Jews in Nazi Germany, the Tutsis in Rwanda, and the Muslims in Yugoslavia, certain groups of Chinese people never violated any criminal laws but were punished and murdered simply because they were considered a threat to the ruling party’s power. Systematic discrimination became a means to create a single-class society in Communist China, a society that the government could easily control. Therefore, the goals of “genocide” and “classicide” are the same and both are atrocities that violate basic human rights.

I witnessed this classicide first hand as a youth in China. I was arrested as a young student at the Beijing Geology College for speaking out against the Soviet invasion of Hungary and criticizing the Chinese Communist Party. In 1960, I was sentenced to serve in the Laogai for being a “counter-revolutionary rightist.” During the next 19 years, I was imprisoned in 12 different forced-labor camps around China, where I was forced to manufacture chemicals, mine coal, build roads, clear land, as well as plant and harvest crops. I survived beatings, torture, and starvation, and witnessed the death of many fellow prisoners from brutality, disease, starvation, and suicide. The slogan found at the gates of the CCP’s Laogai, “Labor makes a new

life” is frighteningly similar to the Nazis concentration camp slogan, “Labor makes you free.” Today about 3 to 5 million people suffer in the Laogai camps. Yet little is known about the Laogai, which is comparable to the Soviet Gulag. Only by making the word “Laogai” public by printing it in every dictionary in every language can the injustices of the Laogai be understood.

Today, the enemies of the CCP have changed. They are no longer certain classes of people such as landlords or bourgeoisie. On the contrary, the government has embraced wealth, foreign investment, and capitalism. Rather, today the CCP’s enemies are freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. The CCP continues to stifle freedom of speech, expression, religion, and the press in order to maintain control. People who protest government policies are beaten and thrown in prison without trial. Internet Web sites and news sources are frequently shut down and censored. Executed prisoners’ organs are being harvested without consent and sold for thousands of dollars in China and abroad.

The world cannot ignore the reality of Communist China today. The world cannot forget the nations and the people held captive by Communism. Even if China became democratic tomorrow, we cannot forget its past and its people.

—Harry Wu is Executive Director of the Laogai Research Foundation.