

May 1 - Victims of Communism Day | Ten Films to Honor the Dead

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Perhaps *as many as a hundred million people were victims of communism in the last century, deliberately rounded up, shot, starved, or simply forced to march into snowy wasteland until dead, exterminated by communist regimes.*

The most comprehensive statistical source for democide statistics, Death By Government, puts the toll at **106 million**.

Necrometrics estimates that Stalin and Mao alone killed 60 million. Wikipedia, defining democide more narrowly, puts the toll between 21 million and 70 million. The Museum of iCommunism estimates **100 million murdered**. The Black Book of iCommunism estimates **80 to 100 million**.

And yet, there are still plenty of people who worship communism or marxism in general, often ignorant who haven't a clue about history and what communism really is...

But these are just statistics. As psychologists have pointed out, it's impossible for the human mind to grasp the magnitude of that level of horror through sheer numbers. Just as Schindler's List was instrumental in getting the public to come to finally terms with the Holocaust, it is perhaps through film that death toll of communism can best be understood.

Every May 1st for the last several years, Ilya Somin has written an editorial for the Washington Post declaring the "May Day" so beloved by the Left to be renamed "Victims of Communism Day." I concur, and so, while socialists blissfully celebrate their worker's paradise this May Day, indifferent to the human cost of their political philosophy, I propose that well-meaning people consider watching a film on the subject, both out of respect for those lost and to be intellectually armed against the ignorance of those still in denial. Here are some recommendations.

Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism

If you don't know much about the origins and history of socialism, start here — you could hardly do better than this eye-opening and comprehensive documentary. It chronicles socialism's rise and fall, and tells much of the untold story of how it all began. By the way, did you know that socialism was first tried in Indiana, long before Marx even wrote a word on the subject? You'll learn about that, and more, in this engaging film. Full review.

China | Mao's Great Famine

Could 45 million people be murdered — the single greatest man-made holocaust in human history — and yet the event pass nearly unrecorded? Up until this point, yes. But a handful of historians are at last ripping the lid off of both the crime and the cover-up of the Great Leap Forward, the deadliest stage of Mao's socialist inferno, in five recently-published books (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)...and in the groundbreaking documentary Mao's Great Famine, the subject of this review. This persuasive film provides a rare glimpse through the razor-wired gates of a "workers' paradise" in its purest state. Full review.

"Not many survived the famine, and of those who did, few have spoken out. Mao's Great Famine compiles never before seen footage from the famine with testimonies of [survivors]."—Patheos

China | Hard to Believe

Forced organ harvesting of political prisoners in China was first exposed in 2006 in a short undercover investigative clip by the BBC (among others), but it wasn't until recently that this horrifying practice started to get the full attention of filmmakers.

In 2014, director Leon Lee released *Human Harvest*, in which he filmed two Nobel Prize winners soberly and carefully investigating the question of Chinese organ harvesting. Their unhappy conclusion — that China is indeed harvesting live prisoners on a “just in time” basis — gave intellectual gravitas to the human rights campaign to stop this practice. A second documentary, *Hard to Believe*, was made in 2015 backing them up. It aired on PBS and won numerous awards.

“This documentary is extremely important for those involved in organ donation and transplantation, human rights, healthcare, ethics, and the law...The credentials of the interviewed experts are impeccable.”

-Journal of Bioethical Inquiry

USSR | The Soviet Story

The untold story of Soviet mass murder of an estimated 7 million Ukrainians is documented through rare archival photographic footage and interviews with survivors. This holocaust is one of the biggest under-reported crimes of the twentieth century, under-reported because left-leaning intellectuals were uncomfortable with the parallels such genocide obviously implied between the Soviet communism and Nazism. Those parallels get laid out cold here.

“...gripping, audacious and uncompromising.”

-The Economist

USSR | In the Crosswind

“In the Crosswind chronicles a sinister and oft-forgotten chapter in the history of communism: in June, 1941, Soviet forces purged the populations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, executing the men and transporting the women and children to Siberian labor camps.”

-Filmatique

“No topic continues to haunt the Estonian national psyche more than the Soviet deportations. Every family of today was affected, in one way or another, by what Helde calls the ‘Soviet Holocaust.’”

-East European Film Bulletin

USSR | Stalin: Inside the Terror

“This is a BBC2 documentary from 2003 and probably one of the best on Stalin and communism. The archive footage is very good and it draws upon some excellent evidence from close witnesses, including Stalin’s own family.”

North Korea | Yodok Stories: North Korea

“Yodok Stories is a documentary film directed by Polish documentary screenwriter and director Andrzej Fidyk and produced by Torstein Grude. Today, more than 200,000 men, women and children face torture, starvation and murder in North Korea’s concentration camps.”

-Wikipedia

Cuba | Improper Conduct

Cuban refugees detail Castro's persecution of "undesirables," particularly gay men. The stories that survivors relate of the labor camps to which they were sent are consistent, shocking, and very credible. This documentary was awarded the Grand Prix at the Twelfth International Human Rights Festival and is one of the very few on this site to earn the highest score in both libertarian content and production quality. Full review.

"The movie's tone is civilized, but the testimony is as savage as it's convincing."
-New York Times

Cambodia | Enemies of the People

"This is patient, persistent, probing and fearless journalism of the highest order and it shocks to the core. "
-Time Out

"Enemies of the People is another disquieting testament to the fact that ordinary individuals under extreme pressure will carry out the most monstrous crimes."
-New York Times

East Germany: Youth Shot at Berlin Wall

was only one person, one 18-year-old who was killed trying to escape communism, but the moment he was killed the Berlin Wall became real because everyone near the wall saw him die. In a poignant record of the tragedy, British Pathe provided this unnarrated, silent 3-minute clip.

"Peter Fechter (14 January 1944 - 17 August 1962) was a German bricklayer from Berlin in what became East Germany in 1945. He was 18 when he became one of the first victims of the Berlin Wall's East German border guards while trying to cross over to what was then West Berlin."