

Marynovych: Overcoming the dangerous Soviet Communist heritage of Putinism

World

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“The aggression of Putin’s regime against Ukraine and its threats addressed to other post-Soviet countries show very clearly now that we have reaped the fruits of our own blindness.”

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 28, 2014 (UBO*) - The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation recently awarded the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom to Ukrainian Catholic University Vice Rector Myroslav Marynovych, a community activist and dissident, and to the spiritual leader of the Crimean Tatars, Mustafa Dzhemilev. Dzhemilev was unable to attend the award ceremony but Marynovych delivered the following acceptance speech for the award: Most Honorable Members of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, Distinguished Guests: It is a great honor for me to receive the Truman–Reagan Medal of Freedom and I want to thank the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation for its dedicated work to overcome the heritage of communism. I am glad to share this honor with my good friend, the former prisoner of conscience and now the unquestioned leader of Crimean Tatars Mustafa Dzhemilev, – just as we used to share the bitterness of communist persecutions in the past. Thank you also for recognizing the colors of the Ukrainian flag among many others, bright and attractive. Our country is enduring challenges no one had expected for the 21st century. The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation has become a symbol of a political outdatedness that now occupies the minds of the modern Russian elite and of a challenging time machine for the whole world. Unfortunately, this occupation also has become the symbol of new sufferings for both our peoples, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar’s, neither of whom have yet recovered from the devastating period of communist dictatorship and post-communist authoritarianism. Twenty-five years ago, at the peak of the enthusiasm inspired by the transformations of that *annus mirabilis*, Europe suggested that a Nürnberg-II for communist crimes would be a costly mistake. At that time, it was widely believed that what was needed was, rather, a strict emphasis on the future, not on the past. Now we understand that this was a costly utopian dream or, rather, simply the postponement of a confrontation with the dangers looming in the future. It was equivalent to leaving seeds of weeds in the field and hoping that they would never germinate. The aggression of Putin’s regime against Ukraine and its threats addressed to other post-Soviet countries show very clearly now that we have reaped the fruits of our own blindness. Communism was an illusion that captured the imagination of many nations and many generations. Overcoming the dangerous Soviet Communist heritage that is blossoming in the form of Putinism requires nothing less than the solidarity of the whole world. We must confront this aspect of the past and, acting in coordination and concord, square these accounts. Let me reinterpret the thought which was already raised here, at this place, a year ago: we do not want the Cold War to be restored and do not want to be hostile to the Russians themselves. By the way, the Ukrainian Maidan was anti-Putin, not anti-Russian. Actually, the Russians are not the first nation seduced by the seeming effectiveness of military solutions in the restoration of a “national pride.” However, it is in the interest of the Russian nation, as it is in the interest of all other nations traumatized by communist rule, to criminalize the communist actions in a legal sense and to repent these crimes in a

moral sense. To overcome the present menace to our values, we need to change our perspective and to develop a stand of solidarity for values and principles which constitute the democratic system that we cannot sacrifice. This was the world's message at the time when Mustafa and I were incarcerated in a camp with seven rows of barbed wire. This is the same message of ours as I stand here, on the free land of blessed America.

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