



# VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION™

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2023

## VOC Convenes 9th Annual China Forum



*Matthew Pottinger delivers the China Forum keynote address.*

The China Forum fosters open dialogue and critical discussions about China's role and influence in the global landscape, particularly concerning trade and economics, foreign policy and security, and human rights and political development. Each year, the China Forum tackles key issues, highlights emerging challenges, and proposes potential strategies for addressing these concerns. This vital discourse helps Americans understand the nature of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and the key issues in US-China relations.

Since 2014, VOC has provided a unique platform, unlike any other in DC, for experts to educate American leaders and engage in open discussion about the immediate dangers posed to the world liberal democratic order by the CCP. The 2023 China Forum featured five panels on Beijing's repressive ethnic policies, the challenges of economic integration with China, the CCP's foreign policy and power projection, and accountability for the perpetrators of Beijing's human rights atrocities.

This year's keynote address was given by Matthew Pottinger, Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution and China Program Chairman for the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Pottinger spoke about the CCP's tactics throughout the 20th century which accounted for the majority of deaths inflicted by communist regimes, and the mass suffering caused by the CCP, specifically the unknown death toll of Uyghurs and Tibetans. Pottinger remarked that totalitarian systems are worthy of scorn and satire, and that political humor is an effective tool for resistance.

# 9th Annual China Forum Conference

*“[VOC’s] mission, to never let us forget the atrocities of the last century, is now compounded by new work: the essential task of documenting atrocities attributable to communism in this, the 21st century.” —Matthew Pottinger*

This year, the House Select Committee on China joined the China Forum to present their assessment of US-China relations. Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), Chairman, and Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Ranking Member, discussed the importance of understanding China as a threat to American sovereignty and the need for the US to defend American values. The representatives identified human rights as an important point of concern, ways that the US is economically dependent on China, the need to stop the flow of capital into China, and the business community’s tactics to combat this issue.

The panel discussions that ensued revolved around several critical themes. One panel dissected Beijing’s forced labor schemes targeting ethnic minorities and rural workers, addressing the challenges around the implementation of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA). It also highlighted how forced labor in China permeates global supply chains, implicating Western businesses in these human rights atrocities.

Another panel focused on the ramifications of Beijing’s human rights record on global diplomacy and foreign policy. It scrutinized China’s strategy to make the world “safe for autocracy,” deflect criticism of its human rights practices, and



undermine democratic governance through its influence in international bodies.

The forum concluded with a panel discussion on the potential for legal action against the atrocities in Xinjiang through international mechanisms. It assessed the status and prospects for specific legal actions and highlighted the need for effective documentation and analysis of available evidence.

The 2023 China Forum had significant global reach, with 14,348 people attending and tuning in on the day itself, and the online views continuing to grow post-event. By increasing awareness of these human rights abuses and providing in-depth discussions on the situation, the forum aimed to educate policymakers, business leaders, and the general public to take action.



The evening before the China Forum, VOC held a special screening of the documentary film “China: The Uyghur Tragedy” directed by Romain Franklin and François Reinhardt. The film screening was followed by a panel discussion featuring Rushan Abbas, Executive Director of Campaign for Uyghurs; Elfidar Iltebir, President of the Uyghur American Association; and Anastasia Lin, an actress and human rights activist. Moderated by VOC’s Senior Fellow and Director in China Studies, Dr. Adrian Zenz, the discussion shed light on China’s suppression of Uyghur identity and religion through forced labor, sterilization, and surveillance.



# VOC Hosts International Cultural & Food Fair



*Pictured above are some of the embassies and partner organizations who joined VOC for the International Cultural and Food Fair. From left to right: Embassy of Romania, Campaign For Uyghurs, Embassy of Hungary, and Capital Area Tibetan Association.*

Each year in early November, VOC honors the more than 100 million killed and 1.5 billion still enslaved by communist regimes around the world. On Tuesday, November 7, we marked Victims of Communism Memorial Day with our inaugural International Cultural & Food Fair at our museum in Washington, DC.

This event was organized in association with various embassies and ethnic partner organizations, and we successfully displayed a range of cuisine and beverages from over 20 countries that have suffered, or continue to suffer, under communist regimes. Our guests not only savored culinary delights but also gained valuable insights about each nation's experiences under communism and their unique history, culture, and traditions. This event provided a platform for representatives from various countries to share their experiences under communist rule and fostered a sense of unity and understanding among attendees. The event served as a stark reminder of the atrocities of communism and the struggle for freedom still faced by 1.5 billion people worldwide.

Our program included remarks by Rep. Ben Toma, Majority Leader in the Arizona House of Representatives, who shared his personal experience of living under the Ceaușescu regime in Romania, and Gary Powers Jr., son of Francis Gary Powers Sr., the CIA U-2 pilot who was shot down during the Cold War while flying in Soviet airspace. Video remarks from representatives of all eight states where VOC Day has been passed were featured: Alabama, Idaho, Florida, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Georgia, and Wisconsin.

## ***Event Partners***

Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria  
Embassy of the Czech Republic  
Embassy of Georgia  
Embassy of Hungary  
Embassy of the Republic of Latvia  
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania  
Embassy of Moldova  
Embassy of Romania  
Albanian Community in the Catholic Diocese,  
Arlington VA

Belarusian American Association  
Belarusians of Washington DC  
Campaign for Uyghurs  
Capital Area Tibetan Association  
Center for a Free Cuba  
D Light Café & Bakery  
FIU in DC  
FIU's Steven J. Green School of International  
and Public Affairs

Free Korean Association & One Korea Network  
Havana Club  
Initiative For Change, Justice, and Democracy  
Keep Taiwan Free  
Polish American Congress  
United Help Ukraine  
United Macedonian Diaspora  
Vietnamese Americans for Freedom  
The Wei Jingsheng Foundation

# New VOC Witness Project™ Episodes Launched



VOC continues to memorialize the stories of individuals who have experienced communist oppression through our award-winning Witness Project documentary series. As time passes, countless stories are being lost and it is our goal to record as much testimony as possible from these living witnesses. This fall, VOC produced two new Witness Project episodes featuring the testimonies of Grace Jo and Representative Ben Toma (AZ).

Born in North Korea, Grace Jo nearly starved to death as a child during the famine of the 1990s. After her father was tortured and died for the “crime” of trying to find food for his family in China, and her grandmother died from malnourishment, Grace’s mother knew they had to escape North Korea, no matter the cost. On Grace’s seventh birthday, she, her mother, and her older sister crossed the Tumen River into China. For the next 10 years, Grace lived in constant fear of being caught by the Chinese regime and the North Korean state security. Grace was apprehended twice in China, sent to prison, tortured, and repatriated back to North Korea. But she refused to give up. Through the help of a Christian pastor, Grace and her family would eventually escape communism in North Korea and find freedom in the United States.

Representative Ben Toma represents the people of Arizona after escaping communist surveillance in Ceaușescu’s Romania. After communists seized power in Romania, Ben Toma’s family property was confiscated by the regime. The communist secret police, the Securitate, would eventually surveil the Toma home and monitor their daily lives solely because of their religious beliefs. Fearing for the safety of their children, Toma’s parents escaped communism in 1986—it would be a year before Ben and his three siblings would join their parents in the United States. Today, Representative Ben Toma is Speaker of the Arizona House of Representatives. His experience under the Ceaușescu regime taught him the consequences of communism and the importance of freedom.

In the past year, we have produced and directed 22 new Witness Project mini-documentary episodes and total online views of our Witness Project episodes have risen to reach 2.6 million viewers across all social media platforms.



*Representative Ben Toma speaks at VOC’s inaugural International Cultural & Food Fair.*



# Wisconsin Passes VOC Day Resolution



VOC is honored that the state of Wisconsin passed a joint resolution to mark November 7 as Victims of Communism Memorial Day. Approved in both chambers of the Wisconsin State Legislature, the resolution was authored by Representative Rick Gundrum (R-Slinger) and State Senator Dan Knodl (R-Germantown).

“It was time for Wisconsin to remember the millions of people who lost their lives to communist regimes,” wrote Representative Gundrum. “Communism has no compatibility with American principles of freedom of speech, free market capitalism, and democracy. We must ensure that the crimes committed by communist governments and the people who were victims of

communist genocide are never forgotten.” Senator Knodl said, “We must never allow communism to raise its ugly head again. Communism is a totalitarian ideology that has brought nothing but suffering and death to the people it has subjugated...It is important to remember the victims of communism and to fight for freedom and democracy everywhere.”

Wisconsin joins seven other states in their resolution to remember November 7 as Victims of Communism Memorial Day. It is VOC’s hope that all 50 states will adopt VOC Day and join in the remembrance of the 100 million killed by communist regimes.

## Steel, Wasserman Schultz Re-Establish VOC Caucus

In December, Representatives Michelle Steel (R-CA) and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) re-established the bipartisan Victims of Communism Caucus to honor and bring awareness to the more than 100 million people who have been killed by communist regimes.

“As a proud first generation American whose parents fled from communism in North Korea, I understand how precious our democracy truly is,” said Steel. “Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. We must never take the hard-won freedoms we enjoy for granted. Through this caucus, I am proud to work in bipartisanship to ensure we never forget the cost of communism, the value of our liberty here in the United States and bring awareness to those who are suffering today.”

“Over the course of the last century, countless people have suffered under oppressive communist regimes more interested in consolidating absolute power than protecting fundamental rights,” said Wasserman Schultz. “But today, on our watch, autocracies like Cuba, China, and North Korea continue to suppress dissent, deny basic necessities, and coalesce to threaten global democracy. I’m proud to join Congresswoman Steel in leading this effort to ensure that victims of communism, past and present, are not forgotten.”

“All of us at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation are thrilled about the return of the VOC Caucus to the House and recognize that its work is more important than ever,” said VOC’s CEO, Ken Pope. “Representatives Steel and Wasserman Schultz are leading champions of freedom globally. They know the dangers posed by communism’s failed ideology. We look forward to working with them and all the new Members of the Caucus to ensure that we never forget.”

# VOC Supports Latin American Artists

VOC's Latin American Studies Program supports artists in the region who are fighting against communist regimes through various art mediums.

In October, VOC, in collaboration with our Venezuelan Diaspora partner Voces de la Memoria, held a peaceful and public demonstration in Plaza el Callao, Madrid, Spain. Through virtual reality, citizens were able to learn about the inhumane conditions endured by political prisoners at the hands of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, which amount to 330 people unjustly detained without access to a fair trial, a reliable defense, and the guarantee of their human rights. Political prisoners remain locked up in El Helicoide, a former shopping center that has become the largest torture center in Latin America.



*Protestors gather together on October 3 in Madrid, Spain.*



*Exhibition viewers admire the various entries in the Urban Art Competition.*



*Art gallery attendees view the exhibition "Morir es vivir" (To die is to live) in Bogotá, Colombia.*

Voces de la Memoria is a collective comprised of former political prisoners and members of the Venezuelan resistance, who plan and execute public "citizen interventions" to actively denounce the systematic and sustained human rights violations in Venezuela.

VOC also worked with Arbol Invertido to organize a contest and an exhibition of urban art. Intended to identify new urban "artists" from Cuba and other Latin American countries, the contest helped to connect artists who are fighting for human rights in their countries. VOC and Arbol Invertido organized a video meeting to connect the winning Cuban artists with those from Argentina, Peru, and Colombia. The conversation led to a better understanding of the difficulties of creating art in Cuba.

From October to December, VOC supported two exhibitions in Vienna, Austria during the official program for Vienna Art Week 2023. VOC allied with the Cuban artist group Forma Foco and the Austrian gallery Entre, to present two exhibitions of Cuban activism about widespread national frustration in Cuba due to the violence unleashed by the Cuban government following the anti-government protests of July 11, 2021.

From November 22 to November 26, VOC's Latin America Studies Program supported the Dissident Art Gallery's

organization of a Cuban "artists" exhibition at the San Felipe neighborhood in Bogotá, Colombia. In parallel to the most important art week in Colombia, ARTBO, this exhibition showcased the work of three female Cuban artists—Camila Lobon, Carla María Bellido, and Nadia Díaz Graveran—to the Colombian public for the first time. Entitled "Morir es vivir" (To die is to live), the artists reacted to the situation in Cuba by showing pain and indignation in their art.



# VOC Engages with Polish Partners



*Dr. Elizabeth Spalding presents at the JPPII Conference in Poland.*



*Dr. Elizabeth Spalding participates on a PEMC Conference panel.*

VOC Leadership continues to engage with European partners overseas such as The Polish National Foundation, the Platform For European Memory and Conscience, and The Institute Of National Remembrance. This last quarter, several members of VOC, including Chairman Dr. Elizabeth Spalding, attended multiple conferences in Poland and met with Polish partners to discuss initiatives to promote Polish history in the United States.

In October, at the Saint John Paul II Conference in Warsaw, Poland hosted by the Museum of John Paul II and Primate Wyszynski, Dr. Spalding presented on JPPII and how he changed history, including impacting geopolitics in Central and Eastern Europe. In December, at the PEMC Conference, she spoke on “Decommunization and Transitional Justice,” focusing on the enduring legacy of communism in countries affected by this deadly ideology and the unsatisfactory settlement of crimes and restitution paid to the victims.

On December 21, VOC presented the inaugural “The Flame of Liberty Award” to Dr. Marcin Zarzecki, Chairman, and Michał Góras, Trustee, of the Polish National Foundation for the Foundation’s longstanding support of VOC’s mission. The Flame of Liberty Award recognizes individuals and organizations that have advanced teaching truth, seeking justice, and keeping memory in honor of the millions of victims killed and the billions still suffering under communism.



*VOC Leadership presented the inaugural “The Flame of Liberty Award” to Dr. Marcin Zarzecki and Michał Góras of the Polish National Foundation.*



# VOC Museum Opens Holodomor Exhibition

The Victims of Communism Museum is proud to host a new temporary gallery, “Holodomor Then; Genocide Now; Justice When?” The exhibition, which was curated in partnership with the U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor Genocide Awareness and the Embassy of Ukraine, chronicles the Soviet-made famine that killed millions of Ukrainians from 1932-1933 and connects this dark chapter to Russia’s ongoing and brutal war in Ukraine.



*Munitions recovered from the Kharkiv region of the Ukrainian War are displayed at the Victims of Communism Museum.*



*Museum attendees view art installations at the Victims of Communism Museum's temporary exhibit on the Holodomor.*

The Holodomor was a deliberate act of genocide by the Soviet Communist government, which was controlled at the time by Joseph Stalin. Stalin’s stated goal was to crush Ukrainian nationalism and collectivize agriculture in Ukraine. To achieve this, he ordered the requisition of grain from Ukrainian farmers, and blocked the import of food into Ukraine, creating and perpetuating a famine.

Today in Ukraine, the Holodomor remains a painful memory—a reminder of the country’s vulnerability to both Russian and Soviet aggression, as well as the importance of fighting for freedom. In Russia, President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly denied that the Holodomor was a genocide. The Kremlin’s ongoing revisionism of Ukraine’s history and identity is intended to whitewash the crimes of the Soviet Union and justify Russia’s continued war of aggression against Ukraine.

Open to the public through February 4, 2024, the exhibition showcases writings from Holodomor witnesses, a replica of the Holodomor Memorial in Washington DC, and a collection of photos from Alexander Weisenberger, who documented the Holodomor through his camera during the height of the famine. Connecting Moscow’s historical oppression of Ukraine to the present, the gallery also features shell fragments from the war and photos exposing the impact of Putin’s invasion on the Ukrainian people.





# Romania's Minister of Culture Tours Museum



On November 30, Romania's Minister of Culture, Raluca Turcan, visited the Victims of Communism Museum in Washington DC, accompanied by the Advisor to the Minister of Culture, Ana Mirea, and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Embassy of Romania, Mihaela Osorio. The delegation toured the museum galleries, including the temporary exhibit on the Holodomor, and met with VOC President, Ambassador Andrew Bremberg. VOC was honored to discuss with the Minister the importance of remembering the victims of communism around the world, especially in Romania, and how best to preserve this history through educating about the dangers of communism.

# Former Prime Minister of Australia Visits VOC



VOC was pleased to host The Honorable Scott Morrison, former prime minister of Australia and current member of Parliament, at the Victims of Communism Museum. Members of VOC's Board of Trustees as well as Senior Staff met with the former prime minister, including VOC Trustees Ambassador Aldona Woś and Ambassador Paula Dobriansky, VOC's President Ambassador Andrew Bremberg, VOC's CEO Ken Pope, and VOC's COO Brittany Reilly. It was an honor to discuss VOC's mission and the importance of remembering the victims with Prime Minister Morrison.



# Xi Van Fleet Adds New Book to VOC Library

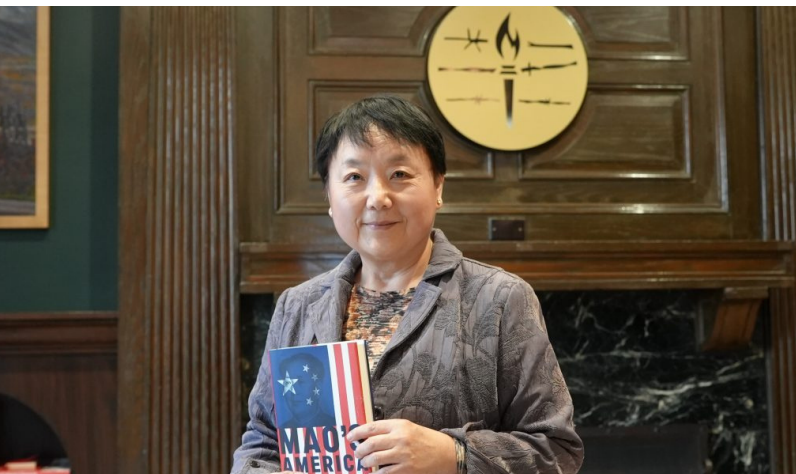
VOC hosted Xi Van Fleet at the Victims of Communism Museum in October. Xi Van Fleet was born in China, lived through the Cultural Revolution, and was sent to work in the countryside at the age of 16.

Xi Van Fleet's experience during the Cultural Revolution was filled with hardship and suffering. She was among the millions of young people who were forced to leave school and go to the countryside for hard labor in the name of “re-education.” Xi witnessed the brutal treatment of people who were labeled as “counter-revolutionaries” or “class enemies,” including her own teacher who was beaten to death by students due to accusations of being a “counter-revolutionary.”

After Mao's death she was able to go to college to study English and has lived in the United States since 1986.

In 2021, she delivered a school board speech in Loudoun County, Virginia against Critical Race Theory that went viral and ignited national conservative media attention. She now devotes her time and energy to warning others about the parallels between Mao's Cultural Revolution in China and what's unfolding in America today.

Since going public with her message, Xi Van Fleet has appeared on Fox News, Newsmax, and radio shows and podcasts across the country. This fall, Van Fleet published “Mao's America: A Survivor's Warning,” telling her story about life under CCP rule and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, finding freedom in America, and her continued fight for liberty for all. While visiting VOC, Xi Van Fleet expressed a common mission and also the importance of educating future generations on the brutality of the CCP's regime.



*Xi Van Fleet stands in front of the Victims of Communism Seal at the Museum with her book “Mao's America: A Survivor's Warning.”*



*Xi Van Fleet tours the permanent exhibits at the Victims of Communism Museum and examines the section pertaining to Mao.*

***“I’ve been very alarmed by what’s going on in our schools,”... “You are now teaching, training our children to be social justice warriors and to loathe our country and our history. Growing up in China, all of this sounds very familiar. The communist regime used the same critical theory to divide people. The only difference is that [they] used class instead of race. This is indeed the American version of the Chinese cultural revolution.”***

***“Critical Race Theory is indeed the American version of the Chinese Cultural Revolution,” ... “The critical race theory has its roots in cultural Marxism. It should have no place in our schools.”***

***—Xi Van Fleet on Fox News***



# Chinese Regime Threatened by VOC



A media investigation has unearthed new evidence of Beijing's secret defamatory campaign against Dr. Adrian Zenz, Senior Fellow and Director in China Studies at VOC. Investigations by *The Financial Times*, *Le Monde*, and *Der Spiegel* based on secret text messages obtained from a western security source show Chinese State Security agents offering money to European intelligence assets in exchange for "attack[ing] the reputation of Adrian Zenz."

These events form part of Beijing's extensive smear campaigns against Dr. Zenz, following his groundbreaking research uncovering mass internments, forced labor, and birth prevention targeting Uyghurs and other ethnic groups in China's Xinjiang region. The revelations also demonstrate how Chinese security agents sought to influence public opinion and politics in Europe, with the aim of suppressing criticism of China, sowing division in European societies, and creating a rift between Europe and the United States.

Beijing has been engaging in covert operations to sway public opinion within the European Parliament and to discredit Dr. Zenz and his research. Detailed in an extensive report, these operations have revealed Beijing's employment of a far-right Belgian politician, Frank Creyelman, who was instructed to help undermine Zenz's credibility. This task was part of a "paid project," where the Chinese agent explicitly stated the objective was to "attack Adrian Zenz's reputation" and to "dig up every one of his scandals."

In January 2021, a Chinese intelligence agent, identified as "Daniel Woo," directed this politician to use his extensive network to launch an attack on Dr. Zenz's reputation. This directive came shortly after Dr. Zenz published evidence of mass forced labor in Xinjiang's cotton fields in collaboration with the BBC, triggering global outrage and a US government ban on imports of Xinjiang cotton.

Internal agent chats revealed by *Der Spiegel* showed how Chinese intelligence harnessed European far-right parties, including the Alternative for Germany (AfD), as part of a broader strategy to divide the West. These communications detailed the involvement of a Chinese intelligence officer, where the officer boasted about pressuring the German government and influencing the narrative surrounding Hong Kong democracy movements.

Dr. Zenz and VOC have long been at the forefront of exposing human rights abuses in China. After his seminal report in 2020 demonstrating targeted forced sterilization of Uyghur women, the US government released an official genocide determination that marked a significant turn in the global discourse on Xinjiang's human rights situation. This also triggered an aggressive response from Beijing aimed at discrediting Zenz and suppressing his findings.

# VOC Releases New China Research

New research by Dr. Adrian Zenz, VOC Senior Fellow and Director in China Studies, reveals how Beijing is expanding its system of forced labor in Xinjiang while hiding it behind poverty alleviation programs. The findings are detailed in a new paper published on October 25, in the academic journal *Central Asian Survey*.



Dr. Zenz's research explains how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has coerced hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs into factory jobs far from home since 2016, justifying the practice as reducing poverty and unemployment. However, this serves to undermine Uyghur identity and culture. For the first time, key witnesses and documentary evidence conclusively shows that Uyghurs who decline to comply with state employment mandates are liable to be detained in camps.

“The CCP used forced detentions as just one method of punishing non-compliance in the programs,” explains Dr. Zenz. “One woman was detained for harboring ‘extreme religious thoughts’ after refusing a factory job arranged by the government because she had two small children and elderly in-laws to care for.”

The new paper gives authoritative proof of punitive detention for the first time. The research further reveals that the scope of these coercive labor transfers has dramatically increased, from over two million to over three million annually. Meanwhile the CCP has made forced labor less visible by curbing or ending the camp-to-labor system and instead relying more on so-called poverty alleviation programs to place Uyghurs into forced work. New policies under Xinjiang's party secretary Ma Xingrui use “unemployment monitoring” to make it nearly impossible for Uyghurs to leave jobs arranged by the state.

In another new academic paper published on November 30, Dr. Zenz performs the first systematic assessment of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) 2012 Survey Guidelines for measuring non-internment state-imposed forced labor in Central Asia.

The research argues that while the ILO's lesser-known 2012 Survey Guidelines can effectively capture forced labor in regions like Xinjiang, they require adaptation because the original indicators focused on private sector forced labor.

By contrast, the ILO's widely cited 11 indicators of forced labor were never intended to formally measure forced labor. Yet these inadequate indicators are frequently referenced in relation to Xinjiang, including in the European Commission's recent proposal to ban forced labor imports.

The new research provides valuable insights into refining measurement tools and policies to address state-imposed forced labor systems like those in Xinjiang. Dr. Zenz's work highlights the urgent need to accurately evaluate complex forced labor dynamics in order to enact effective reforms.

## To our supporters . . .

**Thank you! Your partnership allows our work to continue. We are immensely grateful for your support. In 2023, we have made an incredible impact in educating more people about the history and horrors of communism. Together, we are making a difference in fighting the rise of communism around the world. Thank you for your generosity.**