



## VOC Hosts 11th Annual China Forum

On October 27-28, VOC hosted its 11<sup>th</sup> annual China Forum in Washington, D.C. This seminal event convened leading scholars, experts, and policymakers in the areas of trade and economics, foreign policy and security, human rights, and political development to discuss the evolving threats from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

This year's Forum featured five keynote speakers, four panels, three members of Congress, three interviews, one book talk, and was attended by an in-person and virtual audience of over 11,000 people.

Day One featured a fireside chat with former member of Congress **Mike Gallagher**, who sat down with VOC's **Ambassador Paula Dobriansky** to consider how the U.S. government can push back against the CCP. Gallagher noted that VOC is an "incredible national asset... [that] sponsors world-class scholarship."



*"Silence is the oxygen of tyranny."  
—Rushan Abbas, Uyghur activist and advocate*



China Forum keynotes were delivered by **Dr. Rush Doshi** of the Council on Foreign Relations, former **Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen**, **Dr. Katrina Lantos-Swett** of the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice, and **Damon Wilson** of the National Endowment for Democracy. Speakers covered how the West can push back against an aggressive CCP, the importance of bipartisan action from Washington, the challenges of our moment and the hope for a brighter future, and why the West must support dissidents who are leading the fight against the communists in Beijing.

VOC was honored to bestow the Lee Edwards Award for Outstanding Scholarship to **Dr. Frank Dikötter**, presented by VOC Chairman **Dr. Elizabeth Edwards Spalding**.

# VOC Hosts Roll Call of Nations in Atlanta, Georgia



Andrea Lauer Rice, Daughter of 1956 Hungarian Freedom Fighter, President of the Hungarian American Coalition, and VOC Trustee; Rodney Mims Cook, Jr., Founder and President of the National Monuments Foundation; Carmen Agra Deedy; and VOC's Dr. Eric Patterson and Ashlee Davis.

On November 7, 2025, VOC, the **Hungarian American Coalition**, and the **National Monuments Foundation** hosted *Victims of Communism Memorial Day: Roll Call of Nations* at **Millennium Gate Museum** in Atlanta, GA.

Each year on November 7, VOC marks *National Day for the Victims of Communism*. This year, VOC was honored to host this commemoration in Atlanta as Georgia is one of 10 states that have passed legislation to recognize VOC Memorial Day. The city of Atlanta has called herself the “gate city of the south” for well over a century, welcoming refugees from around the world. On November 7, we recognized the brave community members who have fought against communist regimes past and present, many of whom fled communist regimes and sought freedom in the United States.

**Carmen Agra Deedy**, Cuban refugee and award-winning children’s book author, provided the keynote. Deedy is known for her funny and insightful narratives which are culled from her childhood as a Cuban refugee in Decatur, Georgia, including *The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!*, *14 Cows for America*, a New York Times Bestseller, and *The Peanut Man*, which was selected by the Georgia Center for the Book to represent Georgia at the Library of Congress’ National Book Festival for 2025.

*“The price of freedom is dearly bought and easily forgotten if we do not tell the stories. That is why New York, a city of trees, voted for an axe. We need to tell the stories to our children.” —Carmen Agra Deedy*

Following speaker remarks, **18 Honorary Consulates and organizations** participated in a Roll Call of Nations Ceremony during which representatives from current and former captive nations laid a floral bouquet in commemoration of those killed by communism and those still living under communist oppression.



Jose Perez (second from left), Cuban Refugee, retired economist and former Regent of the University System of Georgia, and members of the Marti Historical Society.



Members of the Vietnamese American Community of Georgia and Vietnamese Women’s Association of Georgia.

# VOC Museum Serving as a Schoolhouse



On August 22, VOC commemorated the 36th anniversary of the Baltic Way in partnership with Joint Baltic American National Committee, the Embassies of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the Polish American Congress.



VOC China Studies Fellow Matthew Robertson was interviewed on *American Thought Leaders* about his research confirming that China operates a state-sponsored system of organ procurement from prisoners.



This fall, the VOC Museum is hosting a new temporary exhibition on the war in Ukraine with 18 powerful posters from Ukraine's Institute of Judaica that depict how people's lives have been affected by Ukraine in conflict.



On September 18, VOC hosted a panel on the regional impact of authoritarian regimes in the Caribbean with Rosa María Payá, Pedro Urruchurtu, and Ronna Rísquez, moderated by Rodrigo Diamanti.



On October 21, in collaboration with Florida International University's Cuban Research Institute, CasaCuba, and FIU in Washington D.C. Center, VOC hosted a showing of the film *Cuba's Eternal Night*.



On October 22, VOC hosted its first First Ladies Night at the Museum, a discussion and reception featuring Chinese Cultural Revolution survivor, Xi Van Fleet.

# Educating the Next Generation



Students from Hillsdale College tour the Victims of Communism Museum.



VOC has taught hundreds of students about Operation Pedro Pan through our current temporary museum exhibit.

VOC works to ensure that the rising generation understands the truth about communism and the eternal value of freedom. Since 2016, our curriculum has been equipping middle and high school teachers to tell students the truth about communism. Just last year, we published the fourth edition of our flagship high school curriculum and expanded our curricular materials to middle schools and even elementary grades. We now offer **five different curricula** for students ages 4<sup>th</sup> grade through university level.

## Student Essay Contest for America 250

VOC is currently holding a student essay contest to teach young people about how the Declaration of Independence inspired freedom movements around the world. VOC will recognize up to 52 outstanding student essays (U.S. high school and college students are eligible) that focus attention on how the Declaration influenced declarations, speeches, and other political writing in foreign contexts during the 20th century. For more details and to apply, visit [victimssofcommunism.org](http://victimssofcommunism.org).



Students from American Academy in Colorado tour the Victims of Communism Museum.



Students from The Catholic University of America have Q&A with VOC's Dr. Eric Patterson.

# Equipping Teachers Nationwide

This fall, VOC participated in **eight teacher training events** reaching over **1,200 educators in six states**. VOC has made substantial progress in developing collaborative partnerships with like-minded groups working on civic education, allowing us to plug our content into their established networks and reach classrooms in even more ways, including Coalition for Empowered Education, Foundation for Economic Education, Founding Forward, and Texas Public Policy Institute.

Educator trainings by VOC experts such as **Ken Pope**, Senior Fellow for Academic Operations, and **Dr. Elizabeth Spalding**, Chairman, are in high demand and receive stellar feedback. In November, Mr. Pope gave a lecture for the Virginia School Board Member Alliance. On the spot, the organizer extended the Q&A for as long as needed due to attendee interest and importance of the topic, and Mr. Pope answered questions for an additional 45 minutes.

VOC's work with **State Departments of Education** and **School Boards** continues to grow. In November, Florida launched new education standards for teaching about communism. Developed in partnership with VOC, this bold education directive will be rolled out across classrooms in Florida in the 2026-2027 school year. "It was a privilege to join a great group of scholars and Florida's Department of Education in developing comprehensive, high-quality standards for the history of communism," said VOC's Ken Pope. "VOC looks forward to continuing our work with Florida and supporting teacher training seminars next year."



Dr. Elizabeth Spalding gives a lecture at Founding Forward in Valley Forge, PA.



Ken Pope gives the keynote lecture for the Florida Social Studies Teachers Conference in Orlando, FL.

*"With the resurgence of communist ideologies across the United States and throughout the world, it is more important than ever for students to understand the catastrophic failures and human suffering caused by communist regimes." —Anastasios Kamoutsas, Florida Commissioner of Education*

## We are educating the next generation:

**2,815**

Students Reached in  
2025

*165% increase  
over 2024*

**1,479,615**

Students Reached  
Since 2013

*In all 50 states +  
Washington, DC*

**9,189**

High School Teachers  
Reached in 2025

*383% increase  
over 2024*

**14,710**

Total Teacher Alumni  
in Schools

*Reaching 73.5M over  
their careers*

# VOC Chairman Awarded Hungary's Order of Merit

On October 22, **Dr. Elizabeth Spalding**, VOC Chairman and Founding Director of the VOC Museum, was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order Merit of Hungary at the Hungarian Embassy in Washington D.C. Conferred by the President of Hungary, **Tamás Sulyok**, and presented by **Péter Szijjártó**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, the award is one of the country's highest honors. According to the official laudation, Dr. Spalding was recognized for "her work in presenting the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight, as well as Hungary's and the Hungarian nation's struggle against communism, at both educational and scholarly levels, and for her efforts in strengthening a positive image of Hungary."



Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, presents the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of Hungary to Dr. Elizabeth Spalding.

**Ambassador Szabolcs Takacs** lauded the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation as "an institution created to draw attention to the cruelty of totalitarian regimes, ensuring that future generations learn from credible sources and remember the past." He praised Dr. Spalding for her scholarship and her role in researching, writing, and designing the Victims of Communism Museum.

Dr. Spalding spoke of her family, intellectual mentors, and Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II, and Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty as influences on her teaching and scholarship as well as her work through the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation and Museum. "On this special day," she said, "I express my deep gratitude for authentic freedom and the friendship between the American and Hungarian peoples."

The award ceremony was part of the Embassy's commemoration of the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

United States Deputy Secretary of State **Christopher Landau** participated in the event and spoke of Hungary's courageous fight against communism as well as the importance of teaching about the past and the continuing influence of this most deadly ideology.

# VOC Confers Awards to Ferrer, McMeekin

On November 10, 2025, VOC, in partnership with the Embassy of Lithuania, presented the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom to Cuban dissident **José Daniel Ferrer**. Originally given in absentia in 2020 while Ferrer was imprisoned, the medal recognizes Ferrer's lifelong commitment to democracy, human rights, and opposition to communist oppression in Cuba, where he endured more than two decades of imprisonment, torture, and persecution.

The award was presented to Ferrer by VOC Chairman **Dr. Elizabeth Edwards Spalding**. At the ceremony, Lithuanian Foreign Minister **H.E. Kęstutis Budrys** highlighted Ferrer's fearless pursuit of liberty for all Cubans and reflected on the Cuban people's fight against communism—a struggle that Lithuania has also faced. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State **Christopher Landau**, who helped welcome Ferrer at the event, called out the crimes of the communists in Havana and urged European allies to hold the Cuban regime accountable.



*"I'm here, thanks to the solidarity of friends and organizations, in the name of the political prisoners who are still suffering in Cuba... Communism does not need to be debated. It is the worst system that the human race has endured... This is why the work of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation and governments like the United States and Lithuania is so important." —José Daniel Ferrer*



Dr. Sean McMeekin receiving the award (center) alongside Dr. Alexander S. Duff, Associate Professor in the School of Civic Leadership at the University of Texas at Austin (left), VOC's Dr. Eric Patterson (right), and Dr. F. Flagg Taylor IV, Chair of VOC's Academic Council and Executive Director & Professor Center for Civics, Culture, & Society at Miami University.

VOC is proud to announce **Dr. Sean McMeekin** as a 2025 recipient of the *Lee Edwards Award for Outstanding Scholarship*. VOC's signature honor for academic achievement, the Lee Edwards Award recognizes leading minds in the fight against communism. Dr. McMeekin is a member of VOC's Academic Council, the Francis Flournoy Professor of European History and Culture at Bard College, and the winner of ISI's 2025 Conservative Book of the Year for his new work, *To Overthrow the World: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Communism*.

Like Lee Edwards, Sean McMeekin is a compelling writer. The New York Review of Books called his book, July 1914, "Almost impossible to put down. A punchy and riveting narrative." The BBC said of Stalin's War, "Remarkable book...meticulously researched...elegantly written."

Dr. McMeekin was presented with the Lee Edwards Award on October 16 at VOC's educator conference in partnership with the University of Texas at Austin, *Teaching the Twentieth Century: Communism and Dissent*. Dr. McMeekin provided keynote remarks, during which he said, "Teaching the truth about communism to this generation is not easy as there has been so much misinformation. But, the historical record is unassailable and I am very proud of the work of this conference."

# New Temporary Museum Exhibit on Ukraine

On October 14, VOC opened a new temporary exhibition: *Ukraine — The 21st Century War, A Story Told Through Images, Testimonies, and Memory*. Created by the Institute of Judaica (Ukraine) with the support of the Dar Charitable Foundation (Ukraine) and the DAAR Foundation (US), this gallery invites visitors to walk through the lived experiences of Ukraine in war—from the shattering first day of invasion to the enduring resilience of people rebuilding their lives under fire.

The exhibit has been visited by many student groups, including Arcohe School students from California, who came to Washington, DC on an educational visit. Ukrainian Embassy Counselor Katja Smaglyi met with the group to answer students' questions about the work of a diplomatic mission and how the lives of Ukrainian children have been impacted by the Russian war.



Students from the Arcohe School with Ukrainian Embassy Counselor Katja Smaglyi.



High school seniors visiting from Norfolk, Virginia.



Homeschool group from Bowie, Maryland.

# International Partner Convenings

On December 2 at the Victims of Communism Museum, VOC hosted a half-day conference called “In the Name of the People: Communist Terror in Serbia 1944-1945.”

Three decades after the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia is still struggling to deal with its communist past. Statues of communist leaders remain. Former communist officials were voted into office, rather than face repercussions for their crimes. Josip Broz Tito, the communist dictator of Yugoslavia, is still viewed as an infallible leader by many.



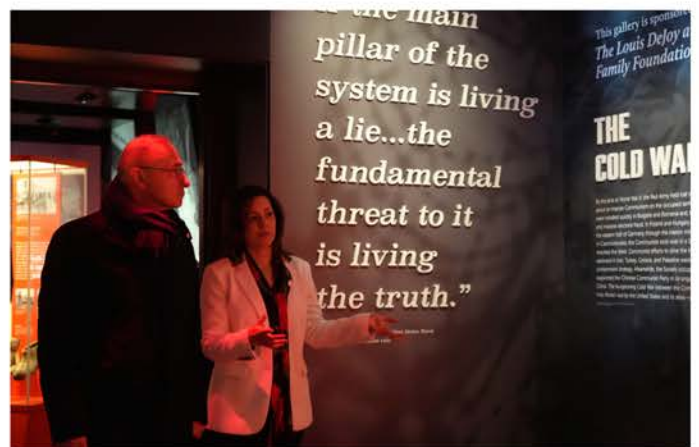
Leading Serbian scholars **Dr. Srdjan Cvetkovic**, **Dr. Ena Mirkovic**, **Father Sasha Petrovic**, and VOC’s **Stefan Mandic** considered the challenges facing researchers working to memorialize the victims of communism, the origin of Yugoslavia’s cult of personality, and how Serbia can reckon with the crimes of its past.

*“Part of the task of remembering is not just remembering the past for today, but to keep that memory for the future. We must remember so we do not repeat the same mistakes.”*

*—Stefan Mandic, VOC Research Assistant and son of Serbian immigrants*



On November 14, VOC’s Dr. Eric Patterson met with Dr. Nora Dimitrova Clinton and Dr. Evelina Kelbecheva of the American University in Bulgaria and Noris Balabanian of the American Research Center in Sofia Foundation to discuss ideas for partnership in 2026.



On December 3, Croatian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlić Radman visited the VOC Museum and met with VOC Chairman Dr. Elizabeth Spalding to discuss future partnership in telling the Croatian story under communism.

# Captive Nations Christmas Tree and Menorah



Croatian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Gordan Grlić Radman, places the Croatian Embassy ornament.

VOC is honored to have 14 embassies and partner organizations participate in contributing an ornament for the annual Captive Nations Christmas Tree.

On Saturday, December 6, VOC held its annual **Family Day at the VOC Museum** to celebrate the holiday season in the spirit of hope and freedom. The event featured a reading of *The Rooster who Would Not be Quiet!* written by Cuban American author Carmen Agra Deedy, a cultural dance performance by the DC Music Academy's SLAVA School of Ukrainian Music and Dance Children's Ensemble, a presentation of the Captive Nations Menorah, and the lighting of VOC's annual Captive Nations Christmas Tree.



Moldovan delegation Mr. Mihai Popșoi, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Igor Grosu, Speaker of the Parliament; Mr. Ion Groza, Member of Parliament, Foreign Committee; and Ambassador Vladislav Kulminski with VOC's Dr. Eric Patterson.



Lithuanian Ambassador Gediminas Varvuolis and Rasa Varvuoliene placing the country's traditional straw ornament.



DC Music Academy's SLAVA School of Ukrainian Music and Dance Children's Ensemble performance for Family Day at the VOC Museum.



VOC's Ana Leca conducted a reading of *The Rooster Who Would Not be Quiet!* written by Cuban American author Carmen Agra Deedy.

# VOC Breaks China's Forced-Labor Supply Chain

Thanks to VOC's research and impact strategy there has been a market collapse in China's tomato sales to Italy.

Last December, VOC released **peer-reviewed research** that exposed the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) use of forced labor in Xinjiang Province's tomato, pepper, marigold, and stevia industries. The report documented a fifty-fold surge in coercive land 'transfers'—land thefts—as well as uncovered a network that tied these products to 72 major global companies, including Kraft, Heinz, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Unilever, and L'Oréal.

Investigators identified Italy as the main entry point that funneled Xinjiang goods into European markets disguised as "Italian" products.

A **year-long collaboration with the BBC** produced a 90-minute documentary titled "Blood on the Shelves." It traced the entire supply chain from Xinjiang to Central Asia to Italian processing plants. Lab tests on 17 supermarket items confirmed Chinese origin despite labels that claimed otherwise. Moreover, 14 survivors shared their stories of confinement and coerced labor.

VOC's Dr. Adrian Zenz published an op-ed in *The Hill* entitled "Is that slavery on your pasta?" which translated the findings for a mass audience, emphasizing Italy's role as a conduit and expounding shell company tactics.

The impact was immediate. Fourteen members of the UK Parliament demanded answers from retailers. Companies grew fearful of scandal as the evidence tightened around Italian processors. Beijing even held an emergency press conference to counter the revelations.

By November 2025 the market collapsed. The *Financial Times* reported a stunning downturn:

- Italy's imports of Chinese tomato paste **crashed by 76%**, dropping from \$75 million to \$13 million.
- Western Europe saw sales fall by **67%**.
- China cut production by **66%**, from 11 million tons to just 3.7 million.
- Between **600,000-700,000 tons** of tomato paste now sits unsold. **That is six months of global exports frozen by the truth.**

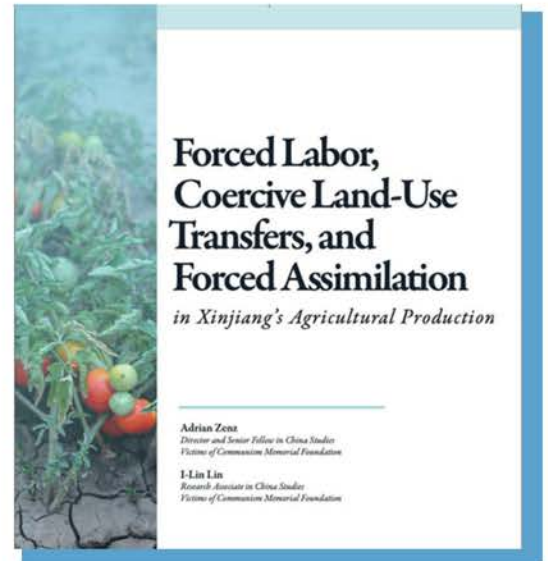
This happened without new legislation. Public exposure and reputational pressure alone broke a major supply chain worth hundreds of millions.

This is the first agricultural breakthrough of its kind.

*This is not really about tomatoes and tomato paste. It is about the men, women, and children forced into slave labor processing tomatoes by the CCP.*

## Why It Matters:

- **Direct causation:** Research → media → retailer pressure → market collapse (11 months)
- **Accountability without legislation:** Reputational pressure alone restructured supply chains
- **First agricultural precedent:** 76% collapse in a major trade relationship worth hundreds of millions
- **Replicable model:** Academic research + survivor testimony + lab verification + strategic media = commercially untenable corporate complicity



# VOC's China Studies Researchers Lead the Way



VOC's Matthew Robertson presents at the fifth annual Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China Summit in Brussels, joining lawmakers from 28 democratic countries to advance coordinated responses to the CCP's human rights abuses and authoritarian influence.

VOC's China Studies Team routinely briefs government officials on the atrocities of the Chinese Communist Party. Recent briefings have included the British Ministry of Defense, the U.S. National Security Council, the U.S. Department of State, the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and various UN agencies.

In addition, our research team has received major recognition this fall. On September 7-14 at the **American Political Science Association Conference** in Vancouver, the team presented two papers which showcased VOC's groundbreaking research methodology and analysis of mass internment as an authoritarian governance strategy.

VOC's research paper on China's Targeted Poverty Alleviation Campaign was accepted for presentation at the **International Security-International Security Studies Section Joint Conference** in October 2025. In a significant academic achievement, all eight of VOC's abstracts submitted to the **International Studies Association** annual conference were accepted for presentation in Columbus, Ohio, in March 2026.

On September 30, Dr. Zenz participated as a discussant at a **strategic Brussels roundtable** on evidentiary standards and applicable thresholds under the EU Forced Labor Regulation (EUFLR), convened by Global Rights Compliance. This high-level technical roundtable brought together leading academic and legal experts, investigators, civil society actors, corporate accountability specialists, and European Commission representatives to inform the Commission's forthcoming guidelines on the practical implementation of the EUFLR, positioning the project at the forefront of international policy development on forced labor enforcement mechanisms.

## Thank You to Our Supporters!

We are grateful for the generosity of our donors Your partnership enables us to educate the next generation about the detriments of communism.

*We especially recognize the following members of our Victims of Communism Museum Remembrance Society who have given a leadership gift in the past quarter.*

### **Pillars of Memory**

Mr. Maximo Alvarez

### **Flames of Liberty**

Mr. and Mrs. Gunnar and Louise Klarr

Ms. Edith K. Lauer

Ms. Linda F. Noyes

Ms. Catherine Windels

### **Voices for Freedom**

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen & Maygene Daniels

Ms. Mary Mochary

Drs. Matthew and Elizabeth Spalding

Mr. Donald V. Smith

Amb. Carlos Trujillo

For more information about the VOC Museum Remembrance Society and to join, visit [victimsofcommunism.org/remembrance-society](https://victimsofcommunism.org/remembrance-society).