

The iron grip must rust

The mournful roll-call of lost states. One by one, Slava Stetsko, president of the Anti-Bolshevik Nations (ABN) called out the tragic list.

"Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Armenia, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, the Caucasus, Croatia . . ."

Once-free nations now held in the iron grip of the world's last remaining imperial system, the Soviet Empire.

"Cuba, Estonia, Ethiopia, Hungary, Laos . . ."

Around me were men and women who had fled their conquered homes with nothing left to them but their pride, defiance and memories. Working people with children in school and elderly relatives to support. No yuppies here.

"Latvia, Lithuania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Poland . . ."

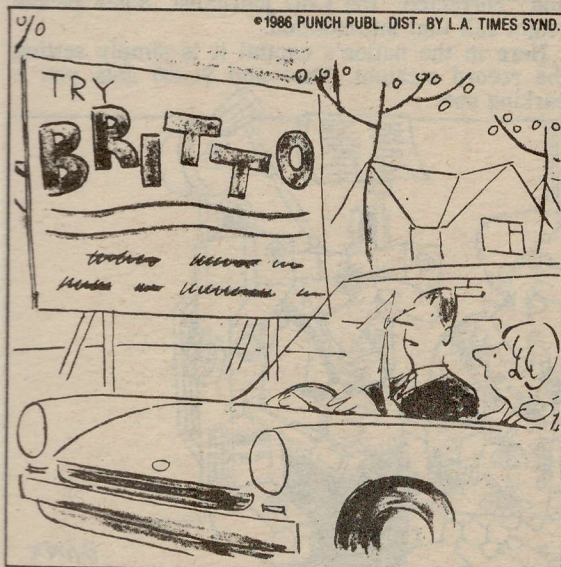
Fighting men and women who had battled communists and Nazis. The Laotian general, Vang Pao, who led his Montagnard tribesmen in a 15-year war against the Vietnamese communists before being abandoned by the Americans. Fighters against communism from Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Vietnam. And men from an earlier nightmare time: Ukrainian survivors of Auschwitz, Belsen and Buchenwald.

Being anti-communist is unfashionable. Your media and intellectual trendies would no more dream of being seen at a conclave like last week's ABN conference in Toronto than at a revival meeting. After all, does anyone really believe that a handful of exiles or their children are going to make a dent in the Soviet Empire?

"Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia . . ."

Not even mentioned, because it was so long ago, the lost Muslim emirates of Tashkent, Bukhara, Khiva and Samarkand — all disappeared into the

Punch



"I understand it's part of a nationwide advertising campaign to launch their new promotional video."

ERIC MARGOLIS



belly of Russia. Who, twitter our academics, can withstand the high tide of history?

The Afghans are ready. In Afghanistan, predicted a fierce-looking *moujihadin* spokesman, the Soviet Empire will begin to unravel. Brave words from a people fighting to the death. That night, \$2,000 was spontaneously collected for the Afghans. Not a lot, but a lot for working people who don't have much take-home pay left after Ottawa's cut for socialist programs and aid to left-wing regimes.

Tepid greetings from Brian Mulroney met with richly deserved boos. Greetings from Ronald Reagan provoked a standing ovation. Canada's face was at least saved by MPP Yuri Shymko who pleaded for Canada to aid the tortured Afghan people — and who rightly demanded that Moscow free its own hostages, Soviet Jews.

"Turkestan, Ukraine, Vietnam."

So ended the melancholy list of nations united in a brotherhood of suffering and lost freedom. People sang, many cried. What, I wondered to myself, was the use? How many similar doleful conclaves had I attended over the years, and heard how many windy speeches from exiles who knew deep down that they would never again see their homelands.

So why go on? The Ukrainian Holocaust was half a century ago; Latvia or Lithuania are only faint memories on dusty maps.

Who can ever imagine Poland or Finnish Karelia free of Soviet garrisons?

I can.

All empires, no matter how great and mighty, eventually fall. Those like Rome, held together by culture, respect and economic success, last longest. Empires like Assyria — and Russia — maintained only by brute power, soon collapse.

Remember that many of today's states are the product of a small number of dedicated exiles who dared dream. Modern Greece was created by a handful of expatriate Greeks, the Phanariots. Islamic Iran by an elderly man who broke the power of the shahinshah, the king of kings.

Who would have dared imagine in 1944, as Auschwitz's ovens roared and smoked, that only four years later Jews would sing *Hatikvah* to greet the birth of the new state of Israel.

And who could have dreamed in 1917 that a quiet little man living in Geneva would soon return to Russia and seize control of the world's largest nation. No one. But, of course, this is precisely what Lenin did.

Our trendy media may sneer at the ABN and other exile groups. The Soviet KGB deeply and justly fears them. Moscow may rule the bodies of the captive nations but their souls remain free and safe in North America — waiting to return.