

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

George Lengvari

George Lengvari, whose early life was shaped by his family's escape from Hungary during World War II and his personal journey through Scotland and Canada, has long been a champion of freedom. As a governor of the Montreal Economic Institute and a dedicated supporter of liberty, he spoke with Atlas Network's Jennifer Porter about his commitment to freedom-focused organizations and his decision to join the Fisher Legacy Society.

Interview by Atlas Network's Jennifer Porter

Jennifer Porter: Why is freedom important to you?

George Lengvari: I was born in Hungary and left as a two-year-old child when my father drove my mother, my cousins, and me out of the country to Austria near the end of World War II.

We were escaping the brutal invading Red Army. We drove to Bad Gastein in the American zone, where my father was arrested by American troops because they said he should be in Hungary. He was sent back to Hungary and was immediately sent to a political prison. My mother and I were then sent to a refugee

camp in Kahlenberg, which was in the British zone near the Hungarian border. After a year in prison, my father miraculously escaped and managed to find his way to my mother's childhood home, which was in the Russian zone in Austria. He was stopped by a group of Russian soldiers asking, "What are you doing here?" He pointed to my mother's home and said, "I live in that home." So he walked over to the home, and of course, the family greeted him warmly, and the Russian soldiers said, "Well, I guess he does live in that home," and they left.



My parents both spoke English, German, and Hungarian. Because they spoke English, they became translators for both the British Army and the Red Cross. A colonel in the Red Cross, who had befriended my parents, got them jobs as domestic servants to the Ross family in northern Scotland. So we ended up moving to northern Scotland, where I started school at age five, and from there to Canada.

One of the things that I learned from my dad, even though he was arrested by the Americans, was, "You can generally trust Americans, but you never trust the Russians, and never ever trust a communist."

Jennifer: How were you introduced to Atlas Network?

George: I was on the board of directors—I'm now governor—of the Montreal Economic Institute. Ten or twelve years ago, I invited Steve Forbes as my guest to speak at an annual dinner talk I sponsored in honor of my father. Brad Lips was there, and he was sitting right next to me, so we had a long chat about what Atlas Network does. That's how I became a supporter. I support quite a few what I call "small 'c'" conservative organizations. Leftists would call me a radical, but I'm not. I believe in what Atlas Network is doing. I believe in these free-market economic think tanks you're working with. What you're doing actually is very special, because you're doing it all around the world.

Jennifer: What do you think is most important about the work Atlas Network does?

George: Number one: it's about **freedom**, and number two: you're doing it not just in one place. You're doing it throughout the world, and some of the people that you're dealing with are taking risks—in some of these countries—by going against the grain. I admire that. So I admire the work you're doing, and I admire the people that you're working with.

The most important word for me in any language is "**freedom**." That's what excites me about what you're doing: you're advocating for freedom. There's nothing better that you could advocate for, because, as we know, there are still hundreds of millions of people who are basically enslaved by totalitarian regimes. We know that's going on in China, for instance.

Jennifer: What would your message be to our partners?

George: "The goal is **freedom!**" and "Never ever give up!" My wife and I have given over 100 vari-

ty basketball scholarships to both men and women athletes at the McGill and Concordia Universities in Montreal. I work a lot with the varsity basketball players at both universities, and my number one rule for them is, "Be a victor not a victim." It is sad and wrong that so many people paint themselves as victims when really they should be looking for ways to be victors. What Atlas Network is doing is teaching people to go after freedom and to be victors not victims. The point is that you can't really seek freedom if you're just looking at the victimology part of it. We're not free, so yes we are victims, but the real question has to be, "How can we become victors?"

And then the second thing I talk about is, "Think positive," which I learned from my father. And that's where that "never ever give up" comment comes from. Of course, the people you're working with are in much harder circumstances than our basketball players. But if you never ever give up, you will eventually succeed. And in the case of the freedom movement, I think it's an even bigger picture. Even if we don't succeed now, the next generation will develop the tools to keep going.

Jennifer: What would you say to someone who is considering joining the Fisher Legacy Society?

George: I would say that you're joining a group that believes in the most important thing in life, and that is **freedom**. And there's nothing better than that!



George and his wife, Inez

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