

Freda Utley

This essay by Jon Utley, the son of Freda Utley, was prepared for Atlas's Investor Report newsletter of April 2005, the month that the Freda Utley Prize for Advancing Liberty was first announced.

The story of my mother is a story of the triumph of freedom during her time. As Russell Kirk wrote, '*Freda Utley has had some part in many of the grand and grim events of our time, and has known half the people worth knowing.*'

She wrote 12 books and was a witness to the struggles which so characterized the mid 20th Century. Her insights were on target, predicting events and consequences that ultimately happened in China, Japan, the Soviet Union, Germany, and the Middle East. She was an early anti-communist in the 1940's and a leader of the struggle for freedom.



After graduating with honors from the London School of Economics in 1925, she became active in British Socialist circles, later becoming a communist after visiting Russia at the time of the New Economic Policy in 1927, when it was flowering. She fell in love with my father, a Russian who worked in London with the Soviet (Arcos) trade mission and then lived with him in Japan in 1929, where he worked as a Soviet trade official.

In 1936, six years after they returned to Moscow in 1930, my father was arrested during the purges and died two years later in a concentration camp in Vorkuta. Even a letter to Stalin that my mother instigated on his behalf, signed by Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw, Harold Lasky and other top English intellectuals, did not help him. The letter and her books are on the internet, see www.FredaUtley.com. To learn more about her works, also read a 1942 [Lecture Brochure](#) about her.

In 1939 she immigrated to America from England, taking me with her and my grandmother.

Five of her pivotal books were *Japan's Feet of Clay* (1938), *The Dream We Lost* (1940), *The High Cost of Vengeance* (1948), *The China Story* (1950), and *Will the Middle East Go West* (1956). *The Dream We Lost* explained the misery in Russia and how the Soviet system really worked. It had definitive influence upon key American intellectuals, who later went on to lead the anti-communist and pro-freedom movement revival after the Second World War. While a correspondent for *Reader's Digest* in Germany, she wrote *The High Cost of Vengeance* about the occupation which also helped stop the continuing dismantlement of German industry. The book's chapter on the 'Nuremberg Judgments' was one of the first critiques, and is still read widely today.

Jon Utley regularly attends Atlas events such as the Asian Resource Bank in September 2004 in Hong Kong, China. He is pictured here with Xingyuan Feng of the Rural Development Institute at the China Academy of Social Sciences (left) and Liu Junning of China's Cathay Institute for Policy Analysis (right).

The China Story, a best seller published by Henry Regnery, was used widely during the McCarthy Senate hearings to explain how the communists won and in showing that communist victories were not inevitable for the developing world. Years after her death in 1978, Konsin Shah, the ambassador of Free

China (Taiwan) in Washington, asked to visit her grave site. When told that her ashes had been put into the Pacific Ocean, he answered, 'Oh, good, then she will come to us.'

Although she loved America as the best embodiment of her ideals, Freda Utley took up many unpopular causes, defending the most downtrodden of her day: Russians and East Europeans under communism, the Chinese suffering from Japan's invasion, starving Germans in their ruined cities after World War II, the Palestinians in refugee camps.

To honor her, I and the other directors of the Freda Utley Foundation have decided to establish the Freda Utley Prize for Advancing Liberty through the Atlas Economic Research Foundation. We see Atlas as an ideal partner in continuing her legacy, because it has the infrastructure, experience, and focus to use funds effectively to promote liberty, especially in the world's poorer nations. Atlas's core beliefs are very much in tune with Freda Utley's: namely, concern for human poverty and misery, and the belief that peoples of all nations have similar aspirations and can learn the universal lessons of freedom and prosperity. My mother would have found the Atlas team very, very much to her liking and affinity, not just in its beliefs, but in its common sense and activism.

The Freda Utley Prize for Advancing Liberty will honor think tanks that are the most successful in spreading the freedom message in developing and post-communist societies that remain plagued by poverty, hopelessness, and restrictive government. The project was inspired by the John Templeton Foundation's matching grant challenge at Atlas, which calls for more philanthropy dedicated to bringing Atlas's work to difficult parts of the world.