

Humpty Dumpty

(The fall of the Berlin Wall)

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.*

Christianity is founded on the Word of God. The Bible records historical events seen by witnesses. It is a series of stories, a meta-narrative based on events observed in normal space-time. Other great religious books like the Koran describe an experience Mohammad is reputed to have had with an angel in a cave. Yet besides Mohammed there was no other human presence; no crowds saw or experienced events. Mohammad was the sole witness. Likewise, the Hindu Scriptures record fantastic events in which people took no part. And again, Buddha's revelations were private. However Jesus performed his miracles, told his parables and lived out his events firmly within public view. Archeologists and all manner of researchers are able to corroborate many of the key facets of his life. Even if they can't accept the resurrection, they accept that an explosion of faith-life occurred because of a huge and expanding number of people who were prepared to believe for, and even die for, this so called "illusion". Today people can build their lives on the teachings and principles of Jesus. If they do this, their lives will be fruitful and even in the face of distress, show remarkable resilience. Jesus told us that a life built on the rock of his teaching will never fall. A life built on lies will be swept away in the event of real testing. (Mt 7:24)

Marxism/communism is a worldview based on an economic perspective, and social Darwinism. It allows for no spiritual life in its philosophy. What follows is the true account of how the people of God were used to bring down an unjust and repressive empire in recent times.

Introduction

In the 1980s, God started a series of events in his church. From Gdansk (Poland) through Leipzig (East Germany) to Timisoara (Romania), God tore down the Iron Curtain and the infamous symbol of tyranny, the Berlin Wall, which divided Europe. Underpinning this physical barrier was the ideology of atheistic communism/Marxism. God answered the prayers of His people: down came the Wall and with it the atheist "Humpty Dumpty", smashed to pieces and quite unable to be put back together again.

The origins of this great ideological divide came out of the armistice at the end of World War 2, forty years earlier. In September 1939, the Second World War began when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia and Poland, followed by many more European countries including Hungary, Ukraine, Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Rumania, and Bulgaria. By war's end, all these countries had been "liberated" by Stalin (meaning permanently occupied by Soviet forces), and a relentless process of incorporation into the Soviet Empire began with earnest. Moscow, the capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), was the power centre of this tyrannical empire.

Post World War 2 Europe had therefore been split into two halves; the victorious Allies, U.S.A., U.K., France, in the West, and the victorious USSR in the East. Defeated Nazi Germany itself was split into two by an "iron curtain", named as such by England's prime minister, Sir Winston Churchill. Its capital Berlin, the frontline of the two power blocks, was also divided: a death strip complete with concrete wall, personnel mines and watchtowers, encircled West Berlin.

Washington provided military protection for the western European nations via NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The eastern European nations, now merely satellites with puppet governments controlled from Moscow, were integrated into the Warsaw Pact, named after Poland's capital. Under communism, oppression of the churches was state policy which believed that the churches would die off; according to Marxist thinking, they were outdated superstitious communities under the control of the belief system of the West.

Location: A divided Europe.

The Iron Curtain with its Berlin Wall savagely divides the peoples of Europe into two blocks, without respect for human contact between families, communities or nations.

Time: 1989

Situation: Prosperous Western Europe faces an increasingly restive and impoverished Eastern Europe; NATO armies face Warsaw Pact armies across the Iron Curtain; a divided Europe prays for release from its divided condition.

Key protagonists:

USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev

Poland, Lech Walesa, union leader, political activist and founder of Solidarity, versus General Wojciech Jaruzelski, President of Poland

East Germany, Christian Fuehrer, pastor of the St Nicholas church in Leipzig, versus Erich Honecker, leader of the German Democratic Republic (the DDR in German), commonly referred to as East Germany.

Romania, Laszlo Tökés, pastor at Timisoara versus President Nicolas Ceaușescu.

#1 POLAND- GOD AT WORK IN HISTORY THROUGH HIS PEOPLE

In Poland a workers' movement sprung up, supported strongly by the Catholic Church. In June 1979 millions of Poles attended church services led by the Pope who encouraged dissent. Communist governments banned strikes, as they presented their captive population and the West with evidence of a contradiction. Communism was supposed to be a workers' paradise, led by the workers, for the workers. So a strike was impossible, as workers, in theory, would be in conflict with themselves. Protests began in the steel yards and docks of Gdansk. In 1980 soldiers and police in Poland shot at protesters and killed and injured many.

The Pope, who happened to be Polish, along with his church leaders, were opposed to the atheist and oppressive restrictions of the Communist government. Jerzy Popieluszko was a priest who supported the protest movement. The police murdered him. Churches became the focal meeting and rallying point of the protest movement, which flowered into the Gdansk Lenin Shipyards strike. Church services were held in the strike communities. Fervent prayer for the intervention of God was central to the meetings. Hymns were sung to the armed police in defiance. The strike was a huge embarrassment to all Communist governments in Eastern Europe and the USSR. It was widely reported in the Western media. The strike of 1980 could have led to an invasion by the USSR as had occurred in Hungary in 1956 and later in Prague in 1968, with major killing and suppression occurring in its wake.

The strikers were incredibly brave, and their faith in God and the Biblical teaching about justice, fortified them. The workers, led by Lech Walesa, formed an organization called Solidarnosc, which means, "Solidarity". The Polish government declared martial law and did all it could to suppress the movement. In 1981 there were hunger marches accompanied by fasts, to protest against the food shortages and the regime's inefficiency. Prayer and Christian banners were displayed in the

marches, which included many women and children. On 27th March a national 4-hour warning strike occurred. It was the largest strike in the history of east European communism. If the military government didn't agree to desist from police brutality, an all day strike would follow. The national leadership backed down and there were worldwide fears that if it didn't, war might break out. Church leaders were central to brokering the resolution to the impasse.

In 1982 the military regime banned Solidarity forcing it to operate as an illicit underground organization. The churches again were the central means for providing support. In 1988, factory workers and miners held huge strikes as inflation made living wretched for most Polish people. One third of the population of Poland was under 25 and they had expectations for an improved life. The old military leaders wanted to maintain the status quo. The young Poles were not unlike the protesting youth of the 1960s in the West, wanting liberalization and change. The soviet army was conducting menacing exercises on the Polish border during the giant strikes.

In 1989 the regime realized it had failed to crush the resistance and they allowed semi-free elections to be held. In 1990 Lech Walesa was elected prime minister of the democratic state of Poland. He was awarded the Noble Peace Award.

In Poland God used His church through truth and faith to let the first communist regime fall. It was the beginning of the end for the Marxist ideology, and the repressive regimes it spawned in Eastern Europe and the USSR. The cold war was about to end; "the iron curtain" was about to be ripped open.

References:

<http://www.solidarnosc.gov.pl/index.php?document=2>

Slide show and timeline of the protests

<http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/en/main-page.html>

Solidarity today, problems still continue in the democratic state of Poland.

https://docs.google.com/fileview?id=0B_N-IK6kh1oYN2lxZDc1OGEtMWQyMi00MmNjLWI5MWYtMzgyYzNjOWYxMjc4&hl=en&pli=1

IB school notes on Solidarity.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D4GQ0w04YU>

School video on the movement, PowerPoint with photographs 6 mins, singing "Dear God let the strike carry on, and references to crucifixion"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peT3-xSzi08&feature=related>

Video of Solidarity

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzTJYdX9tao&feature=related>

Slides with no commentary, 90 secs

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1WOGCDZrk&NR=1> Summary movie

Activities

1. Based on the life of Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his resistance to the Nazis, how did Pope John Paul stand up the communists?
2. How can an organisation continue to operate with some level of efficiency when its leaders are put in prison?
3. Who came up with the phrase “Iron Curtain’ and what does it mean?
4. God chose a small group of people in Gdansk to change a nation and affect the start of the end of the Cold War. Two millennia ago God chose an obscure country and a remote town to start a movement of monumental and colossal significance. Compare this movement from the ancient world in the Middle East with Solidarity.
5. List some key scriptures on justice.

#2 GERMANY, GOD AT WORK THROUGH HIS PEOPLE, HIS CHURCH

"*Friedliche Revolution*" or Peaceful Revolution of 1989 saw the Protestant Lutheran church at the forefront of confronting the Marxist regime of Erich Honecker. He led the setting up of the Berlin Wall and ran the secret police that supported his regime; "Stasi" is the German abbreviation for "State Security. The Stasi had built East Germany into a police State, with a dossier on every third citizen. These were used to harass anyone who showed any sign of critical thinking or opposition. Demonstrations were forbidden, and dissenters were sent to prison. Travel outside Communist Europe was not allowed even for Communist Party officials, unless a family member stayed home as a virtual hostage. In 1989, the Church became God's key force in creating the mass mobilization of hundreds of thousands of citizens.

The populous at large demanded change in the way East Germany was led. The church consistently emphasized the need for peaceful protests only, and the necessity of refraining from the use of violence. Thereby the army and police would not have the excuse to open fire and slaughter the demonstrators.

In the late 1980s, the new leader of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, introduced Glasnost (Russian for "openness"), which liberalized censorship. This was followed by Perestroika (Russian for "restructuring"). Gorbachev visited East Germany in June 1989 and received a rapturous welcome by the East Berliners, who, sensing the impending collapse of the soviet system in their country too, chanted "Gorbi. Gorbi". Much to the displeasure of the Stalinist Erich Honecker, the dissolution of the Soviet Union had gathered a pace by January 1990 and by Decemebr 1991 was complete. Church pastors and elders led rallies and organised protests at considerable risk to themselves and their families. The Leipzig churches mobilized the masses in city-wide protests through the "Montagsgebete" or Monday prayer services. Every Monday since 1982 hundreds of believers and activists met at the Nikolaikirche (the Church of St. Nicholas), to pray individually and collectively for both personal and social concerns. The prayer meetings spread to other churches, swelling the numbers. The praying protesters held candles and filed into the square near the University of Leipzig.

All sorts of tactics were used against the leaders of the Leipzig churches to persuade them to desist from their protest activities. The Church contributed moral values, integrity and a concern for human rights; it had a base line of agreement on the gospel. In contrast, other dissenting groups were overcome by the Stasi, their unity shattered by individualism. The church in East Germany followed in the footsteps of Bonhoeffer opposing Hitler. God's people offered an alternative view to the totalitarian worldview of Marxism and National Socialism. Church pastors were brave, and their ethics, integrity and passionate belief that God cared for each and every person provided the framework for the revolt. The church supported and even hid activists, and coordinated dissent. Instead of encouraging only private pietism, pastors urged people to act and speak out against the repression. There was also anxiety that the USSR would intervene.

In May 1989 Hungary, also caught up in the winds of change, took down its section of the Iron Curtain thus allowing people to cross into the West. This provoked a sense of hope for the East Germans, who having been protesting through church facilitated demonstrations for two years, now could see the Iron Curtain crumbling. The sudden influx of East German holiday-makers to Hungary flooded the West German embassy compound in Budapest. A special train had to be arranged to take them to freedom. And so the exodus from East Germany began in earnest. Horst Sinderman, who was a member of the Central Committee of the GDR, (German Democratic Republic), said before his death: "We had planned everything. We were prepared for everything. But not for candles and prayers."

The huge prayerful protest caused the dictator Honecker to resign. Those replacing him were overwhelmed by the tide of dissent. They panicked and were in disarray, unintentionally giving the command to immediately open the border, crossing through the Berlin Wall at Check Point Charlie. The army and police failed to receive orders to shoot protesting Christians and activists. The communist regime fell. Once again God used his faithful disciples in the church to change history and dethrone an atheist government. On October 3rd 1990 Germany was reunited as one state, and in 1991 the Soviet Union was dissolved. The Cold War ended.

References:

<http://thebigpicture.homestead.com/files/m2m3p29.htm>

Big Issue magazine article on the role of the church in the revolt

<http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/NonviolentStruggleandtheRevolutioninEastGermany-Eng.pdf>

PDF monograph on the German revolution

<http://dougsaunders.net/2009/11/launched-wave-toppled-berlin-wall-retreated-everyday-life/>

Short article on Katarin Hattenhauer

<http://www.nikolaikirche-leipzig.de/englisch-topmenu-100>

Official web site in English of the church community at the centre of all the protest

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvJaLiemeJ0>

Video in German of the demonstrations and church prayer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arrdye5fAmY&feature=related>

Candle lit prayer march, dark start then slides and English pop song overlay

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjC6f0VWWm4>

Video of the famous church today

<http://whitedeercafe.blogspot.com/2009/11/st-nicholas-liepsig-october-1989.html>

Blog on the uprising and media writing out of the church influence

<http://www.history-timelines.org.uk/events-timelines/03-cold-war-timeline.htm>

Timeline of the Cold War in Europe

Activities

The state is the coldest of all cold monsters. Cold are also its lies; and this one crawls out of its mouth: "I, the state, am the voice of the people". But the state lies through its teeth; and whatever it says, untrue it is--and whatever it has, stolen it is. (Friedrich Nietzsche)

1. Is this the statement of an anarchist? Does this mean all states/governments are corrupt? Explain your answer.
2. Draw a map of the two former German nations. i.e. the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. Mark out the divided city of Berlin.
3. On a map of Europe locate Gdansk (Poland), Leipzig (Germany), and now the third city, Timisoara (Romania), in the province of Transylvania, famous in vampire stories.
4. "Thus, we can say with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that our Christian identity today consists of only two things: In prayer and just behaviour. "

Comment on this quote from the official website of Nikolaikirche.

Kirche means church in German, and is why the Scots say "kirk" for church.

5. The church protests of East Germany follow on in the tradition of protest action by Martin Luther, several hundred years before. In what way did his life of protest remind you of the Leipzig protests?

#3 ROMANIA SEES A PASTOR LIGHT A CANDLE AND TOPPLE A REGIME

Laszlo Tökés, pastor, stood up to Ceausescu, the brutal leader of the communist state of Romania. This dictator was oppressing churches, demolishing the buildings and doing all he could to stamp out belief in Jesus. He staged accidents to kill off pastors and set thugs on church leaders to attack and intimidate both them and their families. In March 1989 Hungarian TV showed an interview with Pastor Tökés where he said ethnic Hungarians in Romania were severely discriminated against. He also said the church was oppressed. Tökés had turned a sleepy church in Timisoara into a place of spiritual revival. People wanting to attend services had to face intimidation by the security forces when entering and leaving the church, and even during the service.

The bishop in charge of the pastor rebuked him, ordering him to move to a very remote village and to stay quiet. When Pastor Tökés refused to go his official ration cards for food were cut off. But church members kept feeding the family, opening themselves to retribution by the secret police. A church member supportive of the pastor disappeared, following threats. His body was discovered in woods outside Timisoara, amidst evidence linking the secret police to his death. Another loyal parishioner was hospitalized following major head injuries sustained during a police interrogation. On November 2nd, four masked assailants attacked and stabbed the pastor in the presence of his pregnant wife. They managed to fight them off, but Tökés had slash wounds to the face. He was not killed, as the police did not want to make him into a martyr. Church windows were smashed as the secret police tried everything to break the will of Laszlo Tökés, his family, and the Christians supporting them.

His fearless stand and his church came to a climax on the weekend of December 15th-17th, 1989. Christians arrived and started to surround the church. They came from all over Romania in response to hearing the story of the pastor's persecution. Like the Leipzig demonstrators, they lit candles and sang hymns and prayed as a gathering. About 400 people were shot by the secret police. People showed great bravery facing up to the bullets, and high-pressure water guns from fire trucks. A courageous person managed to smuggle an audiotape of the December 17 shootings out of the country, and western radio stations broadcast it back to Romania. Radio and TV broadcasts from the West to Romania spread the news of Timisoara's lethal clashes as far as the nation's capital Bucharest. Emboldened by seeing the church leading the dissent, protesters took control of key buildings and institutions.

In many cases the army stood back and didn't follow the orders of President Ceausescu to kill the protestors. Unlike Poland and East Germany, there was considerable bloodshed. In Timisoara some army units joined the protestors making it hard for the security police to suppress the prayer meetings and protests. In the town square people were chanting against the atheist Marxist regime shouting in unison, 'God exists!' and 'There is a God!' This was an affront to the secret police and the regime. 150 000 Romanians knelt down and prayed the Lord's Prayer as an act of faith and defiance.

On December 19th an enormous crowd assembled in the city square for an address by the President. The normally deferential Romanians booed the dictator. This disgrace undermined his prestige. One week from the protest outside Tökés's church news came that the dictator and his wife had been executed. Civil war was averted

and another communist regime had fallen due to the courageous and faithful action of the people of God.

Pope John Paul II spoke of the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, noting Christians' "heroic resistance". "Today's world is rediscovering," the Pope told the world, "that far from being the opium of the people, as Karl Marx wrote, faith in Christ is the best guarantee and stimulus of its liberty." Pastors and believers considered it their Christian duty to promote civil rights and human dignity in a rigid, atheist, communist society. The cost was death, suffering, imprisonment, intimidation and loss of property for many. But like the disciples and early Christian believers 2000 years ago, they found the courage and faith to make a stand. History was changed as a result.

This lesson has been prepared because textbooks and the media edit out the role of Christians in world history. This fall of the Eastern European dictators and the collapse of the Soviet block links directly to pastors and elders taking leadership and exercising faith and courage. Their sacrifice and example should not be buried and hidden from students in Christian schools. History is His-story. The secular authors should take note of the fate of those who try to marginalise and remove God from political life and history.

Religion has not been the curse that modern secular authors would proclaim. To the contrary, atheism must be held accountable for killing of whole populations. Secularism is flawed when it analysis history with faith stripped out. More people died in the name of atheism in the 20th century than had died in all centuries prior to that in any cause.

References:

http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Elliott_Laszlo%20Tokes_articles_previous.pdf

PDF article on the Laszlo Tökés led revolt

<http://trevinwax.com/2009/12/22/how-a-reformed-church-overthrew-communism-in-romania/>

Short Christian summary of the story

<http://www.globeaware.org/romania-history>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/special_report/1999/09/99/iron_curtain/timelines/romania_1018.stm

Short summary

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuigVpPngLc&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yF-LSrsd0fw&feature=related>

First of a 4 part series with fine shots, commentary is in German, but English text is easy to read.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fI0PxP-aVU>

Good short video of the story, quite graphic

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuigVpPngLc&feature=related> Short set of slides to English pop music

Activities

1. The Old Testament prophet Daniel had to work for several dictators with absolute power. What were some of the trials he had to face?
2. What were some of the abuses of the Romanian government?
3. Why would the dictator want the Romanians to hate the ethnic Hungarians in his nation? How does racism assist a dictator's power base?
4. What are the common attributes of the pastors and believers who opposed their Marxist/communist governments?
5. What were the common responses of the oppressive governments to the leadership efforts of the church?
6. Comment briefly on the political system of the three counties today, their economies and the strength of the church in terms of faith adherence.
7. "It took a trans-national grass roots movement of courageous Polish workers, Hungarian activists, German refugees and Czech dissidents braving considerable risks in order to revive civil society and regain space for public protest. ... The fall of the Wall was magical because it signalled the peaceful triumph of people's power over a regime that commanded enormous repressive force." *Professor Jarausch*.

Why would historians like this professor leave out mention of the influence of the church?

8. Research and report on one successful escape attempt from East to West Berlin through the Wall.
9. Marx wrote, "Religion is the opiate of the people". In what ways do Communists/Marxists see Christianity as being like opium for the workers?
10. South Africa faced civil war. The church played a key role in the peaceful installation of Nelson Mandela into leadership. Examine the role of the church in the African conflict.
11. "Of course, the post-moderns are right in saying that looking over European history, those who have "a passionate commitment to a system of belief will be most willing not only to die for it but to kill for it." But is it wrong to die for a noble cause—or to kill in a just war, restraining evil? The Greeks recognized courage as one of the four cardinal virtues – courage to defend justice. Where would we be if people did not have a wholehearted commitment to a system of belief like democracy, freedom, and liberty? We'd still be living under monarchs. The issue isn't whether you're willing to die for a particular system of belief – or in some way to kill for it. The problem is whether that system of belief is truth or a lie. In the case of fascism and communism, it was a utopian lie, predicated upon a number of ideas common to postmodernism", (Charles Colson). Utopia seems

attractive. Stalin and Hitler both proclaimed utopia for a select group/race of compliant people.
How can you discern whether a political ideology is based upon a lie?