

2024 MACDONALD LECTURES
IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY

Christians Living Under a Hostile Government

WITH GUEST LECTURER
DR. MANFRED KOBER

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Plymouth, MN



**THE MISSION OF CENTRAL SEMINARY IS
TO ASSIST NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES
IN EQUIPPING SPIRITUAL LEADERS
FOR CHRIST-EXALTING
BIBLICAL MINISTRY.**



**CENTRAL BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

SCHEDULE

8:00 AM – 8:30 AM REGISTRATION

8:30 AM – 9:20 AM – SESSION I:
THE GOOD HAND OF GOD

9:20 AM – 9:35 AM – BREAK

9:35 AM – 10:25 AM – SESSION II:
THE UNTOLD STORY OF AN UNCOMMON SAINT

10:25 AM – 10:40 AM – BREAK

10:40 AM -11:30 AM– SESSION III:
SUFFERING SAINTS IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

11:30 AM – 11:45 AM – BREAK

11:45 AM – 12:35 PM – SESSION IV:
GOD’S PROVIDENCE IN THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM

12:35 PM – LUNCH
FELLOWSHIP HALL

MACDONALD LECTURES SERIES IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY



MACDONALD LECTURES SERIES IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY



Every winter, Central Seminary conducts the MacDonald Lectures Series in Bible and Theology. This academic lecture series was created in memory of Charles MacDonald, Th.D. (1903–1971), beloved professor of pastoral theology at Central Seminary.



DR. CHARLES MACDONALD
CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, 1967-1971

Academically, Dr. MacDonald received a B.S. degree from Northwestern University, the Th.B., B.D. and Th.D. degrees from Northern Seminary, and a D.D. degree from Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis, where he taught the last four years of his life. From 1936 to 1939 he taught on the faculty of Northern Seminary.

Dr. MacDonald served three pastorates, at Elgin, Illinois, then eight years at Mount Morris, Michigan, and eighteen years at Lincoln Park, Michigan. His warm pastoral heart, his efficient dedication, his Biblical principles based on a life of successful service give this book a practical value certain to be helpful to prospective pastors, pastors and many laymen serving in local churches.

PREVIOUS MACDONALD LECTURES IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY



2023 - Dr. Matt Shrader, The Building of a Baptist Tradition:

The Early History and Theology of Northern Baptist Seminaries

2022 - Dr. Ryan Martin, The Sources and Context of “Gracious Affections” in Jonathan Edwards

2021 - Dr. Preston Mayes, The Widow, Orphan, and Immigrant in Deuteronomy:

What can Moses teach Christians about the modern social justice movement?

2020 - Dr. David Saxon, Defending the Gospel:

Lessons from the Polemical Writings of Andrew Fuller

2019 - Dr. Jon Pratt, Issues in Sanctification

Previous Lecture Videos & Notes are available at centralseminary.edu

OUR SPEAKER

DR. MANFRED KOBER



Dr. Manfred Kober is a native of Germany. Born of Christian parents who perished as a result of World War II, he grew up in the war-torn province of Saxony, where he experienced Communist oppression firsthand. In 1952 he miraculously escaped to western Germany, leaving behind his relatives, including a brother and sister. Due to his background, Dr. Kober has a special love for America and a unique perspective on its place in history.

Dr. Kober received his Th.M and Th.D. degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas. He taught from 1969 until 1999 at the Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny, Iowa, chairing the Department of Theology. He also served as the research assistant for Russ Doughten Films and Mustard Seed International, a worldwide evangelism outreach ministry specializing in evangelistic Christian films and discipleship training.

Dr. Kober has contributed to a number of publications. He travels widely in a Bible conference ministry, speaking on such topics as prophecy, the Bible and archaeology, the Christian and his country, contemporary ethical issues and important issues facing fundamentalists.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring Modular Courses

March 25-29 Counseling Problems & Procedures (Dr. Daniel Berger)

April 1-5 John (Dr. Robert Lillo)

Spring DMin Seminar - April 2-5

Affections, Identity, and Idolatry (Dr. Brett Williams)

Friends & Family Banquet – Monday, April 15

Contact Ron Gotzman to Host a Table or to be Invited

Commencement – Friday, May 10

7:00 PM Service

Summer Module Courses

May 20-24, Marriage & Family Counseling (Dr. Stuart Scott)

June 3-7 Acts, (David Melin, ThM)

Every fall, Central Seminary conducts its annual Fall Conference. This one-day conference is designed to edify and equip believers in the areas of ministry and Christian life.

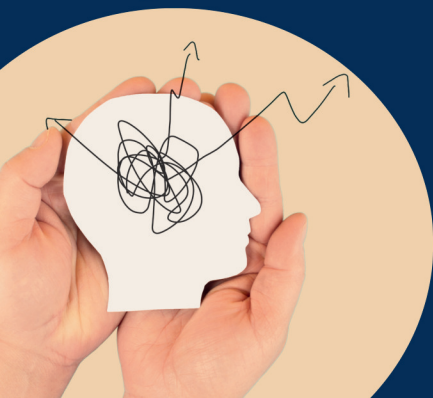
FALL CONFERENCE TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024

MORAL INJURY



Colonel Chris Melvin
SENIOR ARMY CHAPLAIN

Chris Melvin, MDiv, DMin, has served in USAF and the U.S. Army for the past 26 years and now serves as a Senior Army Chaplain with the Arizona Army National Guard. He has been deployed on two combat tours to Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa as an Army Chaplain. Chris is a graduate of the Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services (MHICS) VA/DoD program and is actively involved in relationship retreats, counseling, as well as Moral Injury and PTS work.



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Matt Morrell

President, Central Baptist Theological Seminary

Senior Pastor, Fourth Baptist Church

Thank you for attending our MacDonald Lectures on navigating challenges in following Christ. Like Peter, we desire to 'rejoice and be glad' as we share in the sufferings of Christ as we wait for His return (1 Peter 4:12-13). We hope that our time together can be an encouragement to your ministry of sharing the message of Christ.

INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Central Baptist Theological Seminary intends its graduates to function as Christian leaders, and therefore expects that its students will develop in the following areas.

- Biblical and doctrinal knowledge (ideas that the graduate believes, knows, and understands, including moral convictions)
- Ordinate religious affection (Christ-like character that the graduate demonstrates, including devotion to God, moral fiber, integrity, perseverance, and self-denial)
- Functional ministry skills (tasks that the graduate performs in the execution of Christian leadership)



**PLEASE SILENCE YOUR
ELECTRONIC DEVICES**



**RESTROOMS LOCATED
IN SEMINARY WING**

To maintain the safety of our school children, use only the seminary restrooms located in the seminary wing



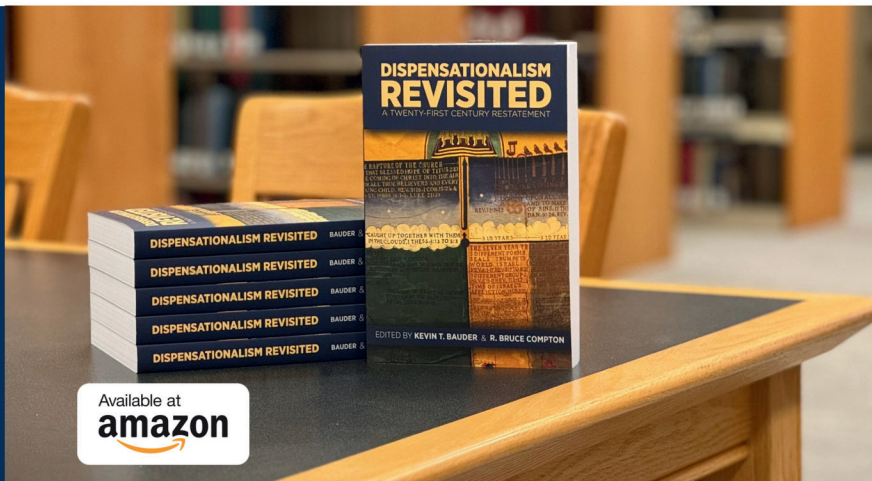
LUNCH SCHEDULE

Food will be served in the Fellowship Hall, located in the lower level of Fourth Baptist Church & Christian School. Seminary staff will guide you downstairs. There is an elevator available for any who need it.

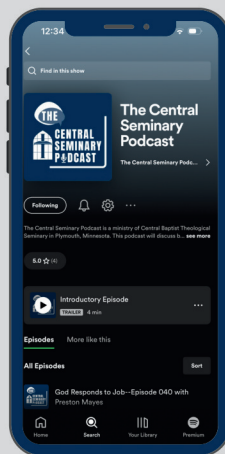
MINISTRIES OF CENTRAL SEMINARY








CENTRAL SEMINARY PRESS
FOR THE CHURCH. FOR THE GOSPEL.



**LISTEN TO
OUR LATEST
EPISODE**



Recent Episodes

-  **The Church's Care for Seniors--Episode 046**
with Jared Page
-  **The Mind/Body Connection--Episode 045**
with Mark Stuckey & Brett Williams, Part 2
-  **The Mind/Body Connection--Episode 044**
with Mark Stuckey & Brett Williams, Part 1
-  **Understanding the Kingdom of God--Ep. 043**
with Roy Beacham & Jeff Brown, Part 2
-  **Understanding the Kingdom of God--Ep. 042**
with Roy Beacham & Jeff Brown, Part 1



WCTS RADIO
"The Bible Station"

Stream 24/7 at:
www.wctsradio.com



**WCTS
RADIO**
AM 1030
FM 97.9

**WCTS Radio exists to minister
the message of the Gospel
to our community through
music and Bible teaching**

SESSION 1:

THE GOOD HAND OF GOD

A TESTIMONY TO GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND PROTECTION

REMINISCENCES BY DR. MANFRED E. KOBER



THE GOOD HAND OF GOD

REMINISCENCES BY DR. MANFRED E. KOBER

Transcription of a Presentation at Saylorville Baptist Church, Des Moines, IA, in 1986

I think as we look back on our lives, each one of us, we cannot help but marvel at the Lord's goodness, at His leading and at His direction. And while I'm sure we all could say it has not always been easy, nonetheless it has always been good because we know that it was the Lord who brought us step by step to the place where we are today.

My students have never heard my testimony in its entirety. Because of this missionary conference, I've been asked to give it, but normally I don't talk about my life. For one thing, it opens up old wounds, and who'd like to do that? For another thing, it sounds too self-serving. But I appreciate the opportunity of sharing my testimony. There is one Scripture passage I always like to mention, because it rather perfectly reflects my experience, and it surely does reflect David's experience when he wrote in Psalm 40 concerning God's marvelous deliverance from his mortal enemy, probably King Saul, who sought after his life. God brought David out of a very difficult situation. Similarly, the Lord delivered me from a dreadful dilemma.

I think the words are well known to all of us. David said, **"I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit (and that's what Communism is, a horrible pit), out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust."** That's my testimony tonight. I trust it's yours as well.

As I think back on my very earliest childhood memories, I must conclude that it wasn't a very happy childhood. Those were the closing days of World War II. I lived in what is now East Germany. The Germans were still under Hitler's reign of terror. Probably my very earliest memory goes back to a time when I looked out of our third-floor apartment window and saw two Gestapo cars come to a screeching halt at the door right next to ours and then witnessed several policemen rushing into the house. They pulled out the neighbor's daughter Gertrud, in her early 30's. She was screaming for her life as they pushed her into the car. They placed her between two of those burly officers and sped away. Three weeks later her parents received notice that Gertrud had died of a heart attack. We found out some time later that she had actually been poisoned by the Nazis. What was her crime? She was overheard by a Nazi living in the same house as she said something critical of Hitler. A man named Herr Thoss had listened at Gertrud's apartment door, taken notes, then turned her in. That was the end of that lovely young lady. And we were afraid that the next time those cars came by, they would come to a screeching halt in front of our door.

The reason being that in those days Hitler waged a very, very vicious campaign against the Jewish people. First they had to identify themselves through the yellow star with the word "Jew" written on it, and then they lost their businesses, and then they lost every means of livelihood. I learned years later that, because the Jewish people were unable to get employment and food for themselves, my grandfather and his brother-in-law helped Jewish people. As Christians who loved the Jews, they went

to their homes and deposited handfuls of money into their mailboxes, so they could go out and buy something to eat. Those Jewish people probably never knew where the money came from. My grandfather felt that we as Christians had an obligation to God's chosen people. He, of all people, could have been mad at the Jewish people. Some crooked Jewish businessmen in our town cheated him out of 45,000 Marks. He never got his loan repaid. But he knew Genesis 12:3, "I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee." He felt it wasn't just a commandment; it was a privilege to help the Jewish people. And that's what he did. My relatives told me later on that he predicted that "Hitler might as well give up. He has lost that war before he has begun it, because he is touching the chosen people." Since 1933 Hitler had persecuted the Jewish people. My grandfather said, "The Jewish people are God's plumb line by which He is going to judge the nations. And God is going to be through with Germany."

It's only by God's grace that one third of Germany is still free. One third is what we now call East Germany, and the other third is now part of Poland and Russia. But my grandfather and some of my other relatives helped these Jewish people. When they couldn't go into stores any longer, they were invited into our home. Each evening we had Jewish people at our supper table. We didn't know who they were. My grandfather never introduced them to us. We were giving them food and then sent them on their way; hopefully many made it to Eastern European countries and some of them to Israel. We never knew what became of them, but we trust that at least we had some measure of success in helping Jewish people get out of Germany.

The Gestapo knew what we were doing, and that's why we feared that the next Gestapo car would pull up in front of our house—and it would have, as surely as the dawn follows the night—if Hitler had won the war. When the Communists sifted through the documents in the city hall of the small town where we lived, about 40 miles inside East Germany, the town of Falkenstein, just a small city of 18,000 people, about 40 miles inside East Germany, they found a list that Hitler's henchmen had made, of people who would be eliminated once the war was won. Hitler wanted to take care of his enemies without and then he was going to take care of the enemies within. Those were Christians, and especially those Christians who helped the hated Jews. Guess whose name was at the very top of the list? Hermann Wolf and family. That included us: my grandfather, Hermann Wolf and his children and their children. So I am glad, for one, that Hitler didn't win the war. Otherwise we would all have been sent to Buchenwald. Well, I think that God honored the faith of our grandfather because through him all my relatives, at least on my mother's side, and many on my father's side, came to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The war was coming to an end, and maybe some of you Americans were among those who bombed us. If you were, I'd like to speak with you outside as soon as the meeting has concluded. At first they came over with large squadrons of bombers. As long as I live, I'll never forget the threatening sound of those engines, hundreds of planes at a time. They bombed every large city: Dresden, Chemnitz, which is the communists changed to Karl-Marx-Stadt and Plauen. As a matter of fact, when they bombed Plauen, a rather large industrial city near us, I was working in the fields. I was four years old at the time but I was already working on my grandparents' farm, my sister along with me, and my mother. We were picking up little kernels of wheat that the farmers had left behind, to keep alive, because there was no food reaching us. The Americans had tightened their stranglehold on the part of Germany where we lived.

The bombers went over. Eight miles away they bombed the city; a few minutes later the black smoke rose to the sky. Hundreds were killed in two hours. If that doesn't leave a deep imprint on your life, nothing will. First they came over with those bombers. Then they came over with smaller spotter planes because the army was moving in on the ground, and to precede the army they came in with some small planes, with an open door and mounted machine guns on the door. I don't know what they did

elsewhere, but in that part of Germany where we lived, they were shooting anything on the ground that moved.

That day the planes came to fly over our town. Providentially, I suppose, because we kids were always playing on the street, my great aunt, a rather portly lady, about a Sabbath day journey around (and that's a significant detail I want you to remember for just a moment, came to the rescue). She invited me to go with her to visit some friends in the forest. She was getting scared that we would be bombed—as indeed we were that day. She wanted me to go with her to the forest where she had some friends; actually they lived at the edge of a small town, the town of Beerheide. When we came to the farmhouse, we found that these people, in turn, had locked up the farm and had fled farther into the forest.

As we tried to gain entrance into the farmhouse, those spotter planes were coming near and you could see them circle, and their circles came ever so close. No shade trees to hide under, and the only visible means for hiding was, you guessed it, the outhouse. It was a typical farmhouse, four rooms and a path. Out in the pasture there was that little building standing. The only refuge we had for me and my great aunt (and I mean she was large) was to squeeze into that outhouse. I remember standing there for three hours until it got dark, watching those spotter planes circle overhead. Once it got dark, we left our hiding place and went back home. We found during that day several bombs had been dropped over our town. Thankfully, none of our relatives was injured or killed in that raid. It was a very tense, fearsome time.

The Americans had been given incorrect information. When they approached on the ground, they had heard that a German army was hiding out in our town, so they surrounded our small town and for three weeks, several hours a day, they lobbed large shells on the town—these 200 pounders—through cannons and tanks. You could hear the sound of the cannon going whump and then ooooooooo; it gave us 15 seconds to make it to the safest room in the house, which was normally down in the basement. Then there was the explosion and the sound of breaking glass and bursting mortar, and so on.

For three weeks we feared for our lives because one never knew when these cannons were going off. The Americans kept food from us because they wanted to starve the German army out. The Germans had fled way to the east. There were no soldiers around anywhere. Before they retreated, they had thrown railroad cars off overpasses onto the road below, as we little kids watched in amazement. The Americans were getting close, and then the soldiers just put a little explosive charge under each car, and Poof! Like a child's toy the cars flew over to the side of the road. Then they brought in these big earth-moving machines. They must have been Caterpillars. They moved anything, even buildings, out of their way. Unbelievable! What a stark contrast to what we saw a few days later when, unfortunately, the Russians were permitted to come in.

When we came back upstairs to our apartment after one of these shelling attacks, we found out that the elderly couple across from us just had been torn to shreds by the shrapnel of exploding shells. I was so afraid that the next night our lives would be snuffed out, that I asked my mother what would happen to me if tonight we would all be killed? And it was then that my godly mother explained to me in very simple terms the plan of salvation. She said, "You can be sure that you're going to heaven where your father and I will be waiting for you, providing you trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. There's nothing you have to do to be saved. Christ has done it all in your stead, and the moment you believe He's your Savior from sin, that very moment He will give you eternal life. And it doesn't matter what happens to you after that, the moment you die you will be in the presence of the Lord and your father and I will be

there waiting for you.” And of course that’s the assurance that I wanted more than anything else, because we had no idea what would happen to us minutes later, let alone hours later.

I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior in those closing days of the war. Not until I came to stay with relatives in New England did I come to actual assurance of salvation. That is, I could say with positive certainty, “I am saved, and I’m saved eternally.” My Methodist relatives—and they are the old-time, fundamental Methodists—did not stress that aspect of the Christian faith. But I thank the Lord today for a Christian father and a Christian mother, a mother who led me, who led my brother and sister very early in our lives, to the Lord Jesus Christ. I trust you’ve had that experience in your life, to come personally to Jesus Christ for cleansing and forgiveness of sins. That makes life worth living. Apart from that, I don’t know what I would have done.

The most startling event during the American siege was the sounding of a shell on the granite sidewalk outside our basement window. We were sleeping, as children, like sardines on the concrete floor. There wasn’t enough room for the adults to lie down. All the men were fighting in the war. The women had to stand guard along the wall. They stood up all night long. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, with the cannons going off, there was a big crashing sound right outside our window. The next morning when we kids climbed out of our basement confinement and went out in the fresh air a little bit, we had a rather macabre game. We would go out with a box, and whatever kid found the largest pieces of shrapnel from those shells, had won. I won for that day, as I vividly remember, because outside our basement window one of those shells had struck—but instead of detonating, upon impact the fuse had broken off with powder and everything intact and that had penetrated the basement wall, which is where I found it sticking. I pulled it out and then I put it in my box. No one had ever seen one of those things before, so I won.

But what had happened to the shell? Rather than bouncing into our basement like it normally would have done, as we figured the trajectory, it rather bounced on the street. From there it then bounced into the basement window of our neighbor’s house where the shell was intact and full of powder but no fuse on it. It bounced on the basement floor, it bounced in the ceiling, and the lady for whatever reason was not in that room. She should have been there. Providentially she wasn’t. She and her son were upstairs. She was sleeping in her bed, and it threw her up and down several times, as if she were sleeping on a trampoline. They told us about God’s marvelous interposition in their behalf. Soon thereafter, as they came over and related their harrowing experience, we all bowed for a word of prayer, thanking God for His safe deliverance.

While the Americans had us surrounded, the only ones who could get any food was us kids. We were small enough to escape notice of the American hidden observers and under cover of darkness we would crawl outside of our town to a little brook called the Goeltzsch. We brought back some leaves called Spitzwegerich (ribwort plantain) and Breitwegerich (broad plantain) and plants like that which grow in moist soil near brooks or ponds. We’d put those in water, boil them and eat that broth and thus at least were halfway kept alive. That went on for three weeks.

Then finally somebody picked up a white flag, marched out to the Americans and said, “What do you want? We’re not fighting you!” They should have caught on after two days. Nobody was replying with armaments from our town. The Americans were super cautious. So, they lifted the siege and rather than moving farther east they just stayed there around our town. And that’s when I picked up my first English. My relatives surmised that if I went out to the Americans, with even a minimum knowledge of English, I might get some food. So my first words were in the English language, “I am hungry.” It took me

awhile to learn that, but it finally stuck with me. My sister two years older, and my cousin just as old as I am, marched out to the American camp. They had just finished breakfast. I didn't know what they were eating. Later I found out that it was pancakes, those flat little things, you know, with butter and syrup. They had a nice stack left over and so we tried our English on them. "I am hungry." They totally ignored us. We asked a second time. But instead of offering us some of the leftovers, they took a can of gasoline, poured that gas over the pancakes and burned them in front of our eyes. Now, I didn't start World War II. We kids didn't have anything to do with those concentration camps. But we felt the viciousness of people in the war. However, this was nothing compared to what the Russians did a few days later.

The Americans came through our town, as you see them in some of those old war movies. Triumphant they stood on top of the tanks and on their armed personnel carriers. They reached in their pockets and threw chocolate bars and chewing gum to the kids. I saw it with my own eyes, so what kept me from getting some? The bigger kids behind who pushed me out of the way so they could maybe dive for that chocolate bar or that piece of candy. I never got any, but everyone else around me got some. Then suddenly, the "Amis" were gone. They never told us. We might have gone with them. The Americans pulled out; and what everybody had feared came to pass. The Russians were coming.

I don't know how much you've been told during the missionary conference, but you must understand that the common people of Russia are just as gracious and nice as common people anywhere else. But in war time, with the wrong commanding officer, and with the ravages of the war, man can become a beast, and especially so when that warfare is directed by the Communists, who have no regard for morality, for ethics, for right and wrong. We saw it in South Vietnam. We witnessed it in Cambodia, where the Communists butchered one-third of the population. What the Americans did as they invaded from the West is nothing in comparison with the atrocities perpetrated by the Russian invaders from the East. Sadly, the first to feel the full brunt and brutality of battle are not the men, but the women. I'll just give you one illustration.

We knew that in the larger cities to the east of us where the Russians had come, all the pregnant women were made to stand in a line, and then the brutal Russians tore open their wombs and killed the fetuses in these hapless women, out in public. That was part of Russian warfare. Needless to say, the women in the part of our country heard about that and they were terrified. Happily, God spared our small town. But in every larger town where the Russians went, their commanding officers gave them three weeks of free reign to do as they pleased. We saw how the Americans were. A few days later, we saw how the Russians were, and we were never mistaken about whose side we wanted to be on.

The Russians came and they put up the Iron Curtain. That was 1949. They completely upended the school system. They fired all the old teachers. They put new young teachers in our schools who had just undergone six weeks of intensive training and political indoctrination. They were already convinced Communists, and they were now told how to take a whole generation of children and make Communists out of them. Their sentiment is this: Give me a child until he is eight, and he will be mine for life. The exception proves the rule. Yours truly has not swallowed the Communist line. But as a matter of fact, most of the young people in East Germany, if I could take you over there this evening, have not swallowed the Communist line. Because any rational person can differentiate between lies and truth. If you are constantly lied to, day after day in school, and you step outside the school and see exactly the opposite to be true, you have no respect for your teachers. They didn't want our respect, they wanted our total obedience. I mean they were disciplinarians from the word Go.

I remember sitting in the classroom of one brutal teacher and if I so much as turned my head slightly to the left or slightly to the right, I was called to the front of the class and slapped in the face by the teacher. That happened to me twice, so I had vivid recollections of that. My students at Faith think I'm tough on them now just because I don't let them chew gum in class and I don't let them sleep for more than five continuous minutes. Listen, you should be in the classroom of some Communist school system. It's another reason why you ought to be thankful you're an American.

The teachers had it in especially for those of us who believed in God and the Lord Jesus Christ. They tried to educate a generation of atheists. What especially bothered them was that when it came to the issue of the God of the Bible and of Christ, those students in class who really did better than some of the others always got to their feet (there were about four or five of us) and objected to what the teachers were trying to tell us. I recollect one instance, which was a rather hazardous time for me, where the professor, a young, very young radical Communist in one of the classes, explained to us, for I don't know how many times, the origin of the universe, from one little speck of dust. It gradually evolved into the whole universe and there was this big bang. You don't need a God to believe in universe, in nature, in science. As a shy ten-year old lad, I didn't know how to refute that Communist atheist evolutionist. But I knew that what he said was directly in opposition to what the Bible taught, what my parents and Sunday School teachers had told me. I raised my hand, and finally the teacher recognized me. Proper procedure was that you stand to your feet and you bow to the teacher and then if he's pleased, he'll call on you. I said, "Herr Lehrer (Mr. Teacher), I can't prove that what you say is wrong; but I know that the Bible teaches that God created the world. And when you die, you will see that I was right and you were wrong." That's a famous last thing to say to a Communist teacher! And literally, all hell broke loose in that school.

The teachers evidently had a faculty meeting and there they decided they would need to put the thumbscrews on us Christians a little tighter, and they did. They lowered our grades. They made us come in after hours. We had classes six days a week. We had to come in evenings to help some of the slower students, two or three hours a night, in their school work. And during the summertime, when we should have enjoyed at least a time off from school, our teachers went with us—they accompanied us everywhere—to camps. We had fun swimming, hiking, sightseeing and the like. But I was chosen to keep the diary, an accurate account of what everybody said and what everybody did during the day. They wanted me to play stool pigeon on my fellow classmates, and I refused to do that. I simply recorded our day's activities, never any negative comments my friends might have made about school or politics. Needless to say, I was in hot water with the teachers because of that.

All our teachers tried to cram atheism down our throats even more than before. My homeroom teacher, who was my next door neighbor, started an anti-Christian tirade in my class. And providentially I remembered something that happened just a few years before. I said, "Do you remember, Mr. Clemmer, do you remember those final days of World War II? Do you recall that night when a shell struck outside on the sidewalk by our window and then bounced through your window? And you and your mother, for whatever reason, were upstairs rather than in the room where you normally hide out? You came to our house that morning, and we bowed together and thanked God for his marvelous deliverance? Are you now denying that it was God that protected you? To whom did we all give thanks that morning?" I said that in front of the class, and his face turned as red as a beet. He didn't say a word in response. But you know something? He never said another word against God. He left me alone. I can't prove it, but I think from that time on I had one friend on the faculty.

Well, the Lord in His all-wise plan saw fit to take my parents away from us. My father was probably killed by the Russians on the Baltic Sea. My mother died soon after the end of the war as a result of it. That left us three kids stranded, my brother, my sister and myself. Word of our family situation finally reached my relatives in New England who had come here in 1927 to escape from the depression of Germany in those days. They invited one of us three children to come over here and join them. But when that invitation finally came in 1951, my brother and sister had already been adopted by fine Christian people. They had moved elsewhere. I was still living with my aged grandfather, so the happy lot of coming to the United States fell on me. Just one little problem—how to get out? How to make it across the barbed wire fences and mine fields?

In those days, you still could go to East Berlin because the wall was not put up until 25 years ago this year, 1961. You could still walk from East Berlin over to West Berlin and then fly from that capitalistic island surrounded by Communist sea across 118 miles of East German territory to West Germany. But we couldn't take that escape route, because we lived in a county called Vogtland, or the county of the counts, where the Russians had special military installations, radar stations, rockets, uranium mines. In these mines they clean much of their uranium for their atom and hydrogen bombs they build in Russia. So for some years we couldn't even leave that county. We were in a prison within a prison.

My relatives tried to hire a mountain guide who would take me across a small mountain range, the Erzgebirge, over into Czechoslovakia and through a corner of Czechoslovakia to the safety of West Germany. But that escape route looked too hazardous because many people that left with these guides were never heard of again. Evidently these unscrupulous men killed their victims, robbed them—because they had converted all their earthly possessions into jewelry or gold or silver. We know most of them never reached their destination in West Germany. They never wrote a letter back home, they never sent a package. And while I certainly did not have much of this world's goods, my relatives weren't about to take a chance with me like that. So there was just one avenue left, and that was through direct, divine interposition. As it turned out, the good hand of God would soon be evident.

We had been praying for the Lord's direction in seeing me out. I have never, once in my life, doubted God or His goodness, because I reflect, as you reflect on God's leading in your life, and I just marvel how the Lord works out events, things that are impossible. I sat down, as a little kid—I wasn't even a teenager yet—and I wrote a letter to the East German government, very simply asking them for a permit to leave. You don't do that in a Communist country because that means either you are guilty of treason, in which case you belong in jail, or you're crazy. Why would you want to leave the most perfect society on earth (from their vantage point, a Communist country) and come to a decadent country like West Germany? So you belong in a mental institution, and the alternatives are not very enviable.

But you know what? God honored our faith and He answered our prayers, as He always does. Maybe not in our time or in our way, but in this case in our time in the way we had asked Him to do it. An official-looking envelope arrived in the mail after three weeks. My relatives tore it open for me, curious individuals that they were. They thought—*Oh, this looks like an exit permit. Ha, ha, somebody's trying to pull a joke on us.* They knew that we were trying to find a way for me to get out. It took them three days to realize that this was the real McCoy, a genuine exit permit. As soon as they realized, "Hey, this guy can go," they quickly packed my suitcases for me, put me on the train and took me as close to the border as they were permitted to go, which was about three miles away from Bavaria, from the West German border.

Just hours later, I arrived near Würzburg in West Germany and stayed with some friends who had welcomed me and wanted me to stay with them until the United States would issue me a visa.

I had arrived in West Germany, rejoicing in my newfound freedom. It was unbelievable to walk through the streets and look in the store windows. And I didn't have a dime! Do you know the first thing I wanted to buy once I got out of East Germany? The thing I coveted more than anything else? The thing which actually, for the first and only time of my life, made me beg somebody for a dime, for just ten Pfennige? A stick of American chewing gum. I despise it when it's chewed in the classroom and in worship services. But to me, that was the ultimate symbol of America, and that was going to be my new home. A friend of mine gave me the Groschen (a dime). That is the first thing I bought in West Germany.

My newfound freedom, or my newfound joy because of that freedom, was somewhat short-lived. Somebody informed the police back in East Germany that my ultimate plans were to come to the United States. I did not have to say that when I applied for the exit permit. But the police came to my relatives' house. They said, "We know the boy is going to America. You have him back here by March 15." That was 1952. "If he's not back by that date, we are going to knock on your door and you are going to have a very difficult time." Well, I had left February 8. That gave me about a month to think what I would do. If you had been in my place, what decision would you have made? Would you have said, "Oh, well, the Lord saw me safely out. Now let the Lord take care of my relatives." Actually, my choice wasn't all that difficult, because I was so homesick I didn't care what would happen if I went back. I just wanted to see my brother, my sister, my grandfather, all my relatives. I knew I would never see them again. Once an individual leaves a Communist country, it is permanent. He is not able to go back. And I expected that to be my lot as well.

I was ready to get back on the train and head back and face the music, so that my brother and sister and other relatives wouldn't have to suffer because of my leaving. But my godly uncle from East Germany, who was my legal guardian in those days, wrote me another letter. He said, "Manfred, let's wait awhile before you make your final decision. If God can perform one miracle to get you out, He certainly can perform a second miracle to keep you out." As you can see, that second miracle happened.

I followed my uncle's instructions to let that March 15 deadline pass. It came and went, and absolutely nothing happened. That is miraculous. When the police say "We're going to be knocking on your door on March 15," you may be sure they are there very early at 7 in the morning, maybe even earlier. They completely dropped the matter. It is as if I had never lived there. They know I lived there, because each year when I apply for a permit for East Germany, I have to go to the same police station where I originally left, and I go in and there's the little guard at the door—it's like a big jailhouse, really—and he opens the door and it slams shut behind you, and you go in the room through several hallways inside the building, sort of like a maze. Then you are finally at the desk. They already have a copy of your application form. They want to know, "Have you ever lived here? When did you leave here? Where did you live? How did you leave?" And they already have all that on file. They pull out a file on me from their system, about a half inch thick. They just leaf through it, shake their head and give me the stamp in my passport to permit me to stay there for however long I'm going to stay.

Each year I'm afraid they are going to close the trap. So far they haven't. And through God's direct intervention, I was allowed to leave and I'm allowed to come back. I entered the United States exactly one year to the day after arriving in West Germany, February 8, 1953. My friends in West Germany with whom I stayed were kind enough to take care of me—very good people. My relatives in the United States had sent some money periodically so they would have something to help me with my food and

clothing. Then the Americans finally gave me an entry permit. Actually, it was easier for me to get out of East Germany than to get into the United States. It took the Commies three weeks to get me an exit permit. It took you Americans a whole year to give me an entry permit. But of course in those days the USA had a quota system, only so many, for stance, 20,000 Germans were permitted to come to America during any given year, and the quota had been full for the previous year, so I had to wait until the following year.

My friends took me to the ship in the harbor of Bremerhaven and helped me to board the second largest passenger liner on earth, the SS America, with the displacement of 40,000 tons. That was my first experience with a ship and with the ocean. I was duly impressed. Those friends just put me on the boat. There was a family who was supposed to take care of me during those eight days of crossing. We had a little gentleman's agreement with them. I said, "I'll behave myself if you leave me alone." They said, "*Das ist gut so. Wir sehen uns öfters*" ("That's just fine. We'll run into each other often"). And so they let me have free run of the ship. I shared my cabin with three other fellows, considerably older than I.

The problem was I didn't speak any English except for "I am hungry," and all the signs were in English on the ship. I tried to make it to the dining hall and I ended up in the swimming pool—not in the water—but twice on the same day in the pool area. (Those ships are so large, you can easily lose your way). Finally, I found my way to the dining hall, but then I was too embarrassed or too proud to ask the people sitting at the table with me for help. There was a lady who owned a chain of restaurants in Germany, a man who owned one of the largest industrial plants in West Germany, and a university professor. I did not want to ask them what this or that item was on the English menu. My relatives had asked me to read an etiquette book before they ever let me leave home. According to German etiquette, when ordering food in a restaurant, you eat it all; you never return any of it. You clean the plate. That is proper etiquette. I never knew what I was pointing at on the menu. The waiter brought it and I ate it. Some of it was good, some of it not so good. The thing that I liked best, finally, was something that I found out several weeks later, to be corn flakes. They tasted pretty good, especially when the waiter put on some milk. And then sprinkled some sugar on the flakes, and they tasted even better. So morning, noon and night I was looking for the words corn flakes, on the menu. My travel companions undoubtedly wondered—what is it with that little guy and corn flakes? I rather enjoyed them!

This was February, 1953. I don't know how many of you get *National Geographic* magazine. Our copy came yesterday. It mentions in an article on dike construction in Holland that the worst storm raged in the North Sea in February of 1953, and at least 1600 Dutch people were killed in that storm. Just as we were bobbing along on top of 30 to 40 foot waves in the English Channel during that time, I had never seen the ocean before, as I mentioned, so I thought these waves were the order of the day. But then I thought something was strange because there were only two or three of us that still made it to the dining hall. And there were fewer and fewer waiters. Now the reason I went to the dining hall was not because I felt so well, but my relatives, again, had told me to keep from getting seasick: two things—just keep eating, and keep exercising. No matter what happens to your food, just keep eating, and I did, three times a day. And I found another crazy little kid who enjoyed exercising as much as I did. There was a ping pong table up on deck. Oh, it's fun to play ping pong on the deck of a ship heaving in the ocean. At one time he was up there and he slams the ball down, and then the ship tilts and you really have your come-uppance as you can take your turn at slamming the ball down his throat. So that's what we did several hours a day. The steps are like this, and when the boat heaves just right, the steps become perpendicular—they actually do. It's a miracle I didn't break something during that ocean crossing.

It was such a severe storm that it took two additional days for that ship to make it. We were blown way off course. Then we were running low on fuel, so we had to stop at Halifax and take on additional fuel before we could make it to New York City. Long before we reached New York harbor, customs officials, the harbor pilot and immigration personnel boarded the America. A certain kind lady from the Immigration Service somehow contacted this lone traveler and said that she wanted to take care of me. She assured me that she would see to it that I would safely get off the ship once we had landed. She promised to assist me in meeting my relatives at Pier 15 on the Hudson River. So I waited patiently with my little hand luggage in that central lounge where she told me to stay until she came back for me. As I remember, it was a beautiful lounge with large leather chairs and couches. But there were no windows to the outside world. I had so looked forward to seeing the skyscrapers of New York and the Statue of Liberty. While everybody else lined the deck looking at the New York skyline and especially the beautiful Statue of Liberty, that symbol of welcome to America, which visitors and immigrants have heard so much about and longed to see, I obediently stayed confined to the lounge. I never saw anything of New York City during that first crossing, because I was too obedient for my own good. I stayed in that lounge. One hour passed, then two, three, four hours. Sadly, that pleasant lady had forgotten all about me.

Only later did I find out the reason for the long wait. It seems that the captain of that ship had to turn the ship on the fulcrum of the pier, just inches away from the pier, under the ship's own power, because of the dock workers' strike. The captains of the tugboats were on strike. Their boats normally push the ship around the turn, against the pier. I have some aerial pictures that my relatives saved from newspapers of the day, showing that marvelous feat; but I didn't know what was going on. Four hours! Finally, I saw everybody leaving the ship, even the waiters and the stewards, and all those people with whom I had become acquainted occasionally in the dining hall, and I figured it was time for me to leave.

I came to the pier, I looked for the letter K, the first letter of my last name, because they had told me under that would be my luggage, and it was there and so was my uncle whom I had never met. Outside were some of my other relatives waiting, and it was marvelous getting acquainted with those folks and with the country, of which I had heard much, but which turned out to be much more marvelous, much more wonderful than I had ever imagined.

I've made that trip by boat several more times since then, and I never tire of arriving in New York Harbor and seeing the Statue of Liberty and all it symbolizes with that sonnet so expressively stating:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore; [and that's what I was]
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*

I think that's God's destiny for America, at least in part, to be a refuge for the homeless, to be a home for those who are persecuted and hounded elsewhere. The lamp on the Statue of Liberty symbolizes, of course, the light of freedom; not just political, but spiritual freedom that America sheds around the world. If it were not for America's missionary activity, there would hardly be any missionaries on earth. Of the world's 50,000 evangelical missionaries, 45,000 come right here from the United States.

Well, when I went with my relatives to their home in Springfield, Massachusetts, I attended a special school for six weeks, two hours in the morning, where a teacher gave special attention to Polish and Greek and Italian students who had come in all throughout the year. She spent 15-20 minutes with each

of us personally during the day. After six weeks, I took a test and tested out of this program and attended regular public school classes. I went to a technical high school, thinking that I might like mechanical engineering. I love drafting and designing. I had a high school teacher who promised me a job in his business. He was designing guns and military hardware for the Springfield armory. But I first wanted to go away to a year of Bible college to get ever so firmly grounded in the Word.

My pastor in those days greatly encouraged me along those lines, Dr. David Nettleton, the former president of our school. That's how I happened to end up in Iowa. He had invited me to teach at Faith Baptist Bible College here in Ankeny, Iowa, when I concluded my studies at Dallas Seminary. I recall being so impressed when I first arrived here in the States because the first words I heard from the first American pastor were in German. Dr. Nettleton had taken the pains to learn a few German sentences so he could welcome me properly in my native language at the Regular Baptist Church in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Halfway through my high school years, the East German government unexpectedly declared a general amnesty for anybody who left before 1957. No matter how you got out of the country, you could come back. All of a sudden the good hand of God opened the door for me to see my relatives again. I did not go back to Germany until I finished my studies at Baptist Bible Seminary, located in those days in Johnson City, New York. The school is now known as Baptist Bible College (more recently, Clarks Summit University), located in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania.

In 1962/1963 I did graduate studies at the University of Erlangen and during that time made four visits to East Germany, each time taking with me needed items such as medicine and clothing, but especially Christian literature for pastors and my many relatives. I recall that at Christmas time in 1962 I took with me five suitcases filled with a total of 500 books. With folks in West Germany and the USA praying for me, the Lord made it possible for me to cross the border without a problem.

Addendum — As it turned out, I made 50 trips behind the Iron Curtain while there was still an Iron Curtain (1962-1989), at least once a year to the DDR and once a year to Czechoslovakia. My brave family joined me every other year. How the Lord wonderfully protected us in many tense situations, I will relate another time.

SESSION 2: THE UNTOLD STORY OF AN UNCOMMON SAINT

A TRIBUTE TO HERMANN WOLF,
A CHRISTIAN DEFENDER OF JEWS IN NAZI GERMANY



Hermann Wolf and Wife Lina

Hermann Friedrich Wolf:

The Untold Story of an Uncommon Saint

Born: July 22, 1875; Kirchberg, Germany

Died: April 16, 1952; Falkenstein, Germany



Hermann Wolf as a soldier in
World War I in 1916



Hermann Wolf with Manfred, Friedhelm
and Elsbeth Kober – 1951



LUTHERSTRASSE 14

Home of Hermann Wolf and Lina Schnabel Wolf

Die gnadenlose
Stunde
des alten
Hermann Wolf

Von Karl Hans Pollmer



Kristallnacht, November 9-10, 1938



Synagogue in Düsseldorf, set on fire during the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 9-10, 1938 (public domain)

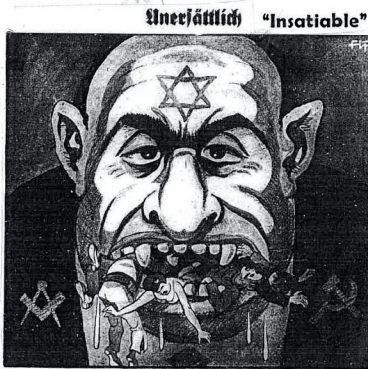
Remembering Kristallnacht



Baden-Baden, Germany - Jews arrested following Kristallnacht were forced to walk through the streets with a sign reading "God does not forgive us." Photo: Yad Vashem

"Get rid of the Jews!"

"The Jews are Germany's misfortune"



Ein Volk zu knechten liegt dem Juden fern
Er hat die ganze Welt zum Treiben gern

Der Stürmer

Deutsches Wochenblatt zum Kampfe um die Wahrheit
HERAUSGEBER: JULIUS STRECHER

Nummer 47 Nürnberg, im November 1937 15. Jahrgang 1937

Wirtschaft und Judentum

Ohne Lösung der Judenfrage keine Erlösung der deutschen Wirtschaft
Der Stürmer und der deutsche Kaufmann

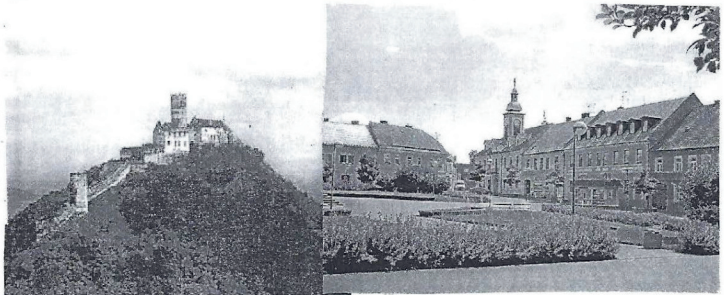
Damen Geld



Die Juden sind unser Unglück!

Der Stürmer was a weekly anti-semitic newspaper, distributed free of charge. Hermann Wolf was the only individual in Falkenstein who refused to take a copy. Thus the Nazis tried to humiliate him by mocking him with poems on the town's public bulletin board.

The Quaint Town of Daksy

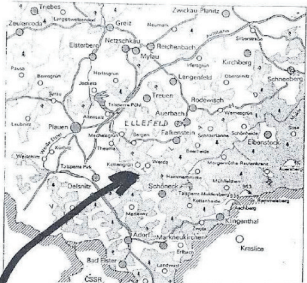


The Beztek Castle

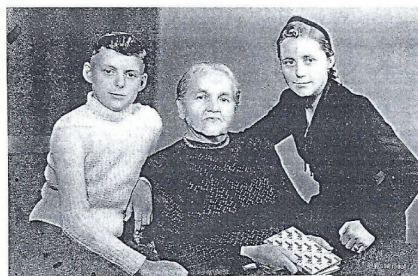
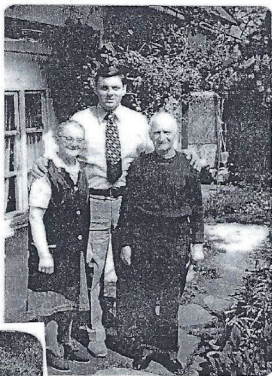
The Nagy Family



VOGTLAND



Visit with Walter and Klärle Pfeiffer



Tante Frieda, Manfred, Elsbeth 1951



Gudrun, Klärle and Walter



Wernesgrün / Vogtland



The 450-year Old Jägerswald



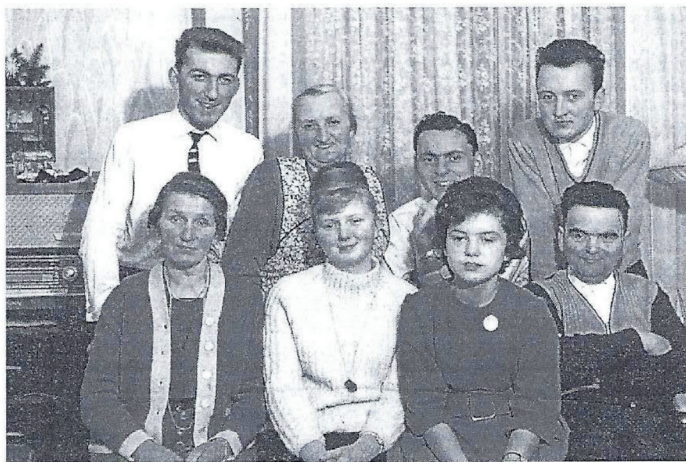
Tante Frieda's Final Home



Elsbeth, Friedhelm, Tante Frieda



Volkspolizei der DDR



The Lüscher Family Christmas 1962



The Police Station in Auerbach

The Untold Story of an Uncommon Saint

Wallace Goldstein of the Jewish congregation in Westfield, MA asked me some years ago to relate to the congregation my recollections of my grandfather, Hermann Wolf. Present were Martin and Liesbeth Loescher (Hermann's daughter), their daughter Evie and husband, Walt Hopkins, as well as son, Dr. Ron Loescher and wife Nancy Loescher. Also, some of Ron's Jewish doctor colleagues were present. Mr. Goldstein introduced me.

The text below is a cassette transcription.

We're very pleased to have Dr. Manfred Kober with us this evening. Dr. Kober is professor of theology at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa. He is a native of Saxony in East Germany. His parents perished as a result of World War II. He grew up in a war-torn Saxony, and experienced Communist oppression after the Americans yielded to the Russian army. He escaped to West Germany in 1952, got a visa and immigrated to the United States.

He stayed in Springfield, Massachusetts, with his uncle, attended Springfield Technical High School, received his Bachelor of Theology degree from Baptist Bible Seminary, and his doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary. He travels widely, and hosts many tours to Israel—in fact, he told me at one time that when he goes to Israel, it is like going home.

He periodically directs a Reformation Country Tour covering seven European countries. He returns to Western Germany in the summer to help Baptist missionaries in their church-planting ministry. I have often asked him where he gets all of the time to do these things. He probably doesn't get too much sleep.

He's going to tell us about a man of special compassion and courage this evening, his grandfather Hermann Wolf, who sheltered and helped Jews in Germany during Hitler's regime, a man whom we should never forget.

HERMANN WOLF

Thank you, Mr. Goldstein. This is a very tenacious gentleman. For three years he's tried to enlist me to speak to the Jewish congregation here in Westfield and any friends that might want to sit in. I am pleased to do so, because I have never spoken at length about my grandfather at all. The advertisement that appeared in the newspaper had a very good title – "Hermann Wolf, Helper and Shelterer of Jews in Hitler's Germany." An alternate title would be, "***The Untold Story of an Uncommon Saint.***" I almost felt like saying "Unique Man," but then all of us are unique; all of us are creatures of God. He's made each of us in God's image and we are all unique in a sense.

Mr. Goldstein read an article in the Springfield newspaper about a family reunion our family had three summers ago, in 1991. That aroused his interest, because the article mentioned in passing the fact that my grandfather was aiding Jewish people in World War II days, and as I conversed with you on the phone, I mentioned that no, nobody in

Israel knew about him. Though I've been there 25 times now and see Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial, very often; and my guide, who is a Jewish gal, married to the top security man in the whole country, says, "Why don't you let us plant a tree in your grandfather's memory?" But my rejoinder is, "We were never introduced to any of the people we helped because if the Gestapo came, we could not divulge any names of those individuals who were so often guests in our house."

I thought, in order to paint a background for my grandfather and give special emphasis to his kindness to the Jewish people, it would help to understand something about his childhood, his career, and thus his convictions and his courage.

CHILDHOOD

You have in your hands a little flyer. I put his picture on there as he looked in World War I days, Hermann Wolf. His birthdate is given. You notice he was born on July 22, 1875, in the little town of Kirchberg and you can locate that on the map that you have in your hands. The other town, Falkenstein, is where we lived and where eventually he took up his residence until such a time that he was called home by the Lord.

He was born into a Christian family. His father's name was also Hermann. They lived in an area of Eastern Germany that has always been greatly impoverished. Kirchberg lies in a little valley surrounded by rolling hills in a mountain range called the Erzgebirge, or the Ore Mountains, because for the 16th and 17th centuries, silver ore and iron ore were mined there. As a matter of fact, many of the towns are still famous because of their mining tradition. One place especially is of interest to me. Right across the border into Czechoslovakia, lies the town Mariental, Mary's Valley. The silver that was mined there was especially valuable and precious. The coins of that whole realm were made out of silver mined in Mariental. The German-speaking people called the coin therefore a Marian-thaler. They dropped the word Mary and called it "thaler" and then that was softened and became "dollar." So the word "dollar" actually has its origin very close to where my grandfather comes from.

His father was a weaver. The mining business went defunct because the silver mines and ore mines had been exhausted. So these humble people had to look around for other vocations. They imported the lace-making techniques; ladies would sit in front of a round pillow and throw together little wooden mallets attached to strings, and made very elaborate lace. Others had large looms on which they produced curtains and a more coarse type of lace. The other tradition is that of woodcarving. Men and women took up the intricate art of carving figurines, especially for Christmastime. Much of what you see in American stores imported from Germany originated, even under Communism, right from that area.

CAREER

As mentioned, my grandfather's father was a weaver, but my grandfather learned the trade of bricklayer. He was born into a godly family. They went to church regularly and worshiped God the best they knew how; in very humble circumstances, however. With little employment, my grandfather soon had to look for other work. He moved in 1911 or

1912 to a town only about 15 miles from there, the town of Falkenstein, where my mother and my brother and sister and I lived in the same house with them. My father, as with all the German men in those days, had to fight in World War II. In Hitler's army, if you didn't, you got a bullet hole through the back of your neck right here.

But at any rate, my grandfather, though a very personable individual, was an extremely private person. You rarely heard him talk about his childhood, at least when I knew him. His daughter Mrs. Loescher is here tonight, and she might remember him talking about his childhood. But when we lived with him, rarely did he do so, except on one occasion. We had a large garden, and in those days my grandfather had me do a lot of the garden work (we had fruit trees and various bushes and produce). He was going to make a sentimental journey back to Kirchberg to Falkenstein, a distance of 15 miles—but it might as well have been across the ocean, because you did not travel in those days, especially right after World War II. But he was so excited that he was going to go home and visit whatever relatives were still there. I suspect he took me along so I could carry the two big pails, one filled with gooseberries and the other with currants. I carried the pails, he carried the responsibility. We took the bus to the closest bus station, Voigtsgrün, and then we had to walk five miles. I was about 11 years old then, and heavily weighted under the load of the pails, but from time to time Opa would carry them as well.

Then at a certain place, as we came near Kirchberg, he stopped and he pointed at a roadside ditch and he said, "That's the ditch I ended up in." Of course he didn't use bad grammar. "This is the ditch in which I ended up." And I said, "What do you mean, you ended up in this ditch, Opa?" And he said, "Though I come from a Christian home, one day some young men convinced me to drink alcoholic beverages with them, and I became drunk and I couldn't stay on the road and I fell into the ditch. My companions left me lying there. When I got out of my drunken stupor, I resolved that I would never touch another glass of alcoholic beverage for the rest of my life." And he didn't. Instead, he made all sorts of good fruit juices; forever in our house we had the best of healthful drinks available.

As we got ever closer to Kirchberg, he told more and more about his childhood. I felt extremely privileged because during our visit I would sit up until 10:00 pm with the old timers listening to their stories about the good old days or the bad old days, whatever. At home we had to go to bed at 8:00. Many German kids still have to go to bed at 8:00, which is unconscionable, but that's the way they carry on the tradition there.

My grandfather moved to Falkenstein in 1911 or 1912, as I mentioned, and the main occasion, I think, for his moving was the building of the large and beautiful city hall in that small town of 12,000 people. Even today, it is one of the most impressive buildings in town. He prided himself in having had a part in putting up that city hall. He was able to save enough money to purchase a house and immediately he put two big weaving machines or looms in the house. There he produced curtains. Then World War I called him into action. You can see him in his World War I uniform as a strapping young man, and also his first wife, a godly woman by the name of Lina, the mother of Mrs. Loescher and the mother of my mother, Hannah, as well.

He fought in the Kaiser's army in France. He was always glad that he never saw any action. He was the company cook, so he stayed in the back enjoying the good food while others had to do the fighting for him. While he was at war in April 1916, his first wife Lina died and left five little children orphans. They had six children, but one only lived to be half a year old. There was Gottfried, my uncle from Springfield who just moved to be with his daughter in Florida. He and his wife are 90 now, still relatively healthy at their advanced age. There was Maria, who for a number of years lived in Hartford, Connecticut. And Liesbeth, here with us tonight, and Martha and Hannah who stayed in East Germany. Hannah, as I mentioned, was my mother. My grandfather returned from war to take care of these five little orphans. But they had some good Christian friends, and he married a woman who, according to my aunt, was very kind to the children. My grandfather outlived her. She died prematurely and then he married another godly woman, and he outlived her. So he had a very tragic situation there, but as a father and as a grandfather was able to build much into the lives of the children and grandchildren, as I can attest.

If you went with me to that little town in East Germany where he lived for so many years, the town of Falkenstein, and found somebody on the streets of that city, maybe sixty-five or seventy years of age and asked, "Do you remember (as he was affectionately called) Wolfen Hermann?"—you used the last name first—I think a smile of recognition would go over their face and they would say something like, "Yes, he always stopped to talk to me." We never got anywhere with my grandfather. We'd go into town less than half a mile away, and it would take us an hour because he talked with everyone on the road. "Yes, he helped my parents in their business." Somebody would say, "Yes, he made the best smoked herring in the whole county." "Yes, he's responsible for my being a Christian." "Yes, he loaned me some money and when I couldn't repay it, he forgave my debt." "Yes, he had the best fresh fruit in his grocery store."

After World War I, the looms were no longer relevant. He was a very industrious individual, as I mentioned. He was not just a man of piety, but a man of industry. He put a coal deposit in the basement of the house; in the first floor, a grocery store; and then he had in the back yard smoking ovens to smoke herring and eel and other fish that people brought to him. He gave away as much as he could, much to the dismay of his three wives. He always felt it was more blessed to give than to receive.

When I knew him in Falkenstein (as I said, my family lived with him in the same house—a very simple row house) he was not just very business-minded, but he felt that everyone who was a godly individual ought to act in a godly fashion. For those of you who may not know as clearly as might be possible the distinction between Christians and Christians—I know the Holocaust is blamed on Christians in Germany. Loosely speaking, Germany might have been a Christian nation. But when we speak about my grandfather being a Christian, we would consider him to be an evangelical Christian and by this we mean that he, sometime in his lifetime, trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior from sin. He, as an evangelical Christian, believed that the reference in Isaiah 53 "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you believe that, you became a Christian. My grandfather was very consistent in that. As a Christian you followed Jesus Christ, who

called God His Father. And as a member of God's family, one ought to act like it. What my grandfather did, whether helping other people, or as I'll relate in a few minutes, helping the Jewish people in a special fashion, wasn't done to gain merit with God. He felt that God so loved him, that God had so enriched him, that that was the least he could do, to do what God wanted him to do. I think his love for the Jewish people and for the Jewish state were obvious to all. I remember his excitement as I was glued with him to the radio set in May of 1948 listening to forbidden radio station RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) upon the birth of the state of Israel. That was one of the spiritual highlights of his life. He knew from both the Old and the New Testament that the Jewish people were God's chosen people, and he was always hoping that there would be a homeland for them. So he was not a Christian in the general term, simply belonging to a Christian denomination; but he was a convinced Christian who had dedicated his life to follow the Lord and to do what His Word said.

CONVICTIONS

So when my grandfather moved to Falkenstein, as industrious as he was during the week, Sunday afternoon he would walk to some small town to visit with a group of Christians, meeting in a town where they did not have a regular pastor. He was an unofficial worker in the church, called an "exhorter." My relatives over there were Methodists, the old-time Methodists, who believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and so on. While he was not called into the ministry, he would take us along: my mother, my sister, who is two years older than I, my brother who is two years younger than I—you can see us here, as we were back in those hoary days of yesteryear—and we would go and cut a path through the forest, the shortest distance to some town like Werda or Bergen or Grünbach, five miles each way on a Sunday afternoon. We would carry our musical instruments. Totally unthinkable in America! You don't walk straight through the forest in the United States. Over there, folks were permitted to remove the dry lower branches as kindling wood and we would walk through the forest to Werda. We would play our instruments; my mother and sister played the guitar; I had the lute, like a guitar but with the round back on it. So we would walk along singing songs and then we would reach the meeting hall. A small group of believers were gathered. Grandfather would read a passage from the Old or New Testament, and then he would exhort the people in their godly life. We would provide some special music. He would close in prayer then we would walk back home. So that was our Sunday activity. And I really don't think we minded it.

Now as I drive through this area every year, I ask myself and I tell my wife and two children who make that trip with me every other year that I don't know how I managed to walk this far every Sunday. I think I still could do it, but we didn't look at distances in those days. We did it because we knew it helped these people in that town who didn't have a pastor.

So he was a very practical Christian who not only served in churches but in his own life had daily devotions with us, and we could tell of his deep faith as we lived with him day by day. When I talk about him in these terms as being a godly man or an uncommon Christian, I do so not out of a sense of filial piety that you want to make your ancestors

look better than they really were. Because I had in juxtaposition to him, my other grandfather on my father's side. My father perished during the closing days of World War II. He was missing in action—he was probably killed by the Russians. But his father was not a Christian. Oh, he belonged to the Lutheran church. He was on the church board there. But he would curse at people on the farm fields that belonged to him, when they wanted to pick some little kernels of grain after harvest because they were hungry. He would curse my grandmother, his godly wife, when he found her sneaking to us a pound of butter on a plate, hidden under a large mountain of cottage cheese, so that he wouldn't see it. From time to time, he suspected she did that. He would brush away the cottage cheese and he would curse her and us. And I remember my two grandfathers sitting in that farmhouse on my father's side, the ancient farmhouse in a small town called Siebenhitz, just two miles outside of Falkenstein—it's still there. There were large wooden beams holding up the low ceiling; in the corner a gigantic white tile stove, a primitive-hewn kitchen table with a bench on either side, and here was Hermann Wolf and there was Reinhart Kober. And here is little Manfred Kober listening in. Maybe I shouldn't have. But my grandfather on my father's side never could understand how you could believe in a God. He had seven sons and two daughters. Four of the seven sons were married and had children. Those four never returned from World War II. And he said to my grandfather Hermann Wolf, "Don't tell me there's a God when He does that to me." And my grandfather Wolf tried to explain, "Did God start that war? Or did Hitler? Are the German people to blame for what is now coming upon them? How can you blame that on God?"

When my grandfather on my mother's side experienced tragedy and trials, he didn't blame God. He said it could have been a lot worse but for the grace of God. As far as I know, my grandfather on my father's side never in a personal way turned to God and believed on Jesus Christ as his Savior. So I could see a godly grandfather and, unfortunately, a very ungodly grandfather. So I applaud Hermann Wolf for his patience with my other grandfather whom I admire, whose memory I still cherish, but who was the farthest thing from being a genuine Christian.

The war years were very difficult for us. The Nazi years were coming to a close, and they did not pass us in a cursory fashion. Hitler, just like the Communists years later, had his tentacles all over in every community. If you look at the picture of the house once more, my earliest childhood memory relates to looking out that third-floor window—the rounded window in the center—to the street below as a car screeched up to a house right next to us. It was a Gestapo car, and three Nazi agents jumped out of the car, went into the house, and pulled Gertrud, a young lady, out of the house. She was screaming at the top of her lungs, and they brutally shoved her in the car and sped away. Her mother cried hopelessly out in the street and we approached her and asked what had happened. She said, "Apparently my daughter had criticized Hitler and now they are taking her away." We feared the worst. Our fears were realized. Three weeks later she received word that her daughter had had a heart attack. In a roundabout way she found out sometime after that the Nazis had poisoned her. Our next-door neighbor's daughter vanished. Some people across the street who had mental problems vanished. So we knew of camps where Hitler was shipping German people and exterminating them. Right from the start we had a very terrifying fear of what was going on.

COURAGE

But my grandfather, you recall, was a Christian and he believed both the Old and the New Testaments. He believed there was something very special about the chosen people. He would quote passages like Deuteronomy 32:10, when somebody was surprised about his special treatment of the Jews. He said, “Didn’t Moses in his swan song tell the nation of Israel that God kept His people as the apple of His eye?” And in Zechariah 2:8, where the prophet says, “He that touches you (Israel) touches the apple of God’s eye.” And my grandfather concluded, anyone that precious to God ought to be precious to us. God had given him a real love for the Jewish people.

But much of his relationship with them never came to light until years after I had left. He would never talk about it. I remember having Jewish people in our home. They shared our humble meal at dinnertime. He never introduced them to us. And we didn’t ask why, because we knew. One of our pastors wrote an article in our denominational periodical, *Die Friedensglocke*, about a situation that happened in our church. He mentioned coming to our house and finding us just ready to sit down for a meal, and my grandfather hospitably invited him to join our meager portion. He said, “Where four can eat, five can also eat;” however many people there were at the time. And then as the pastor bid us farewell, he said, “But I never got to meet Mr.—” waiting” for my grandfather to introduce him. My grandfather stopped him short and said, “I know what you want to know. He’s a friend. He’s a Jewish friend. He’s not the first Jewish friend we’ve had in our house, and he’s not going to be the last Jewish friend in our house. We want him to have a decent meal.” And this pastor in that article that he wrote just a short time after that happened said, “I admonished Hermann Wolf that he was putting his life at risk and that of his whole family.” And Hermann Wolf said, “Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.” The Nazis were motivated by Satan. But he felt he was doing the work of God, and God is in sovereign control over men and their fears of men. So he was fearless from the start.

He knew that Hitler was doomed. As soon as Hitler entered office in 1933, he began to verbally attack the Jews. Discerning Christians were alarmed over the developments. In 1938, in the night of November 9 and 10, Hitler’s henchmen executed the Kristallnacht. Throughout Germany and the occupied territories of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Sudetenland 267 Jewish synagogues were burned, over 7,000 Jewish businesses were damaged or destroyed and 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and incarcerated. My grandfather and all his family knew that God would punish Hitler.

World War II had barely gotten underway when my grandfather warned everyone willing to listen—and remember, he talked with everyone he met—and everybody got the same line—“Hitler might as well give up on this war. He has lost it before he started it, because the Jewish people are God’s plumb line by which He’s going to judge the nations.” You all know Genesis 12:3, “I will bless them that bless thee [the seed of Abraham]. I will curse him that curseth thee.” So my grandfather was convinced that Hitler was doomed and Germany was doomed. When the Communists moved in, he was not surprised that at least part of Germany, really, stood under the judgment of God. In those days, though it may be hard for you folks in America to believe, we did not

realize there were these concentration camps for the Jewish people. We thought the Jews were shipped away to remote places like some of the Germans were, but not until the Americans came in and opened Buchenwald, the closest concentration camp to us, did we realize the full horror of the final solution.

My grandfather helped the local Jewish people whenever he could, often without anyone knowing of his altruism. I don't think even my mother knew much of that. Not until years later did his sister Martha tell me that her husband, Walter Adler, and my grandfather, Hermann Wolf, would go to Jewish homes under cover of darkness with handfuls of money and put them anonymously in their mailbox. So the Jewish people might have suspected where the money was from, but they never knew. Mrs. Loescher reminded me that there were Jewish people in town by the name of Faber. As a matter of fact, she worked in their home for awhile as a housekeeper. Interestingly, they had a young man by the same as my first name, Manfred, except they called him Mandela. There was the family of Eisenmann in our town, and I remember the largest department store was operated by a lady by the name of Auguste Levy. Apparently all these people were in our home. They were given meals, they were given money and then, toward the end of the war, as things were happening quick and fast, they were in our house, they shared our air-raid shelter. Part of our basement was an extension of the air raid room and behind large crates and boxes there was a special little side room where they were. They brought all their earthly possessions along, which apparently they had put all in one large chest, with a rounded top and heavy metal locks. Then when the coast was clear, these people left by cover of darkness. Sometimes they left the chest behind and later someone else would come and take it for them. We little children were always curious—what on earth might they have in this chest? But we were never allowed to touch it, of course. We hoped and prayed that many of them made it to Eastern Europe and eventually to Israel. But as far as them totally being exterminated by the Nazis, we never suspected that, though we thought maybe some were imprisoned, like the hapless of the Germans who opposed Hitler.

There's a tradition in our church—I remind you it was a godly, old-fashioned Methodist church—that every New Year's Eve they had a service (I think they still do), right up until midnight, to see the New Year come in. But at 10 PM sharp the pastor calls for a time of public testimony. Anyone who wants to, comes before the congregation to tell how God has blessed them within the last year. It was also a tradition that my grandfather, who sat in the first row, was the first to rise to the occasion. During the service he sat always with his eyes closed (and everybody assumed he was sleeping); but we knew when we went home and he questioned us about the service, he was very much awake.

Hermann got up, walked the few steps to the platform, right beneath the pulpit, and he gave a testimony. And much to the amusement, I dare say, of some of the people, he concluded each time with a stanza of a song, a well-known beloved church hymn. I'll give you the German four lines, followed by my rough English translation:

No matter how difficult the year had been, and these war years were extremely difficult for him, he praised God. He still testified to God's goodness, even as he lost one wife after another.

*Sel'ger kann ich niemals werden
Als ich schon in Jesu bin.
Alle Freuden dieser Erden
Sind nur Trug und Scheingewinn.*

The greatest treasures I possess,
Are those received from the Son of God;
Because the treasures of this world
Are false pretense,
And count for naught.

People thought that was just a nice way for him to conclude his testimony. As Pastor Pollmer wrote on another occasion, “There was a testimony time when nobody thought that Hermann Wolf would get up and walk to the platform,” because just a few days before, on Christmas Eve of 1950, my mother tragically died; his beloved daughter. How could he get up and testify that he still possessed the treasures in God that he always appreciated? And yet, as Pastor Pollmer says, “Grandfather Wolf came up there and gave his testimony, using the words of Job in the Old Testament who said, ‘The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ And then he concluded with that stanza again.” And their smiles vanished, because they saw that what he said it each year, he spoke from the bottom of his heart. I was there in that testimony meeting, and I remember.

I realize that no matter how tragic the situation—because of World War II you could lose your father, you could lose your mother—my grandfather and my parents used to say, “God will make it up to you.” And He has, and He will for any of us as we commit ourselves to God’s kind and gracious guidance. From our perspective, it may not make sense. But God is too wise to make mistakes, and He is too good to be unkind. I remind myself of that; I remind my students at Faith Baptist Bible College of that. So my grandfather from year to year entrusted himself to the care of the loving, sovereign God.

We had a pastor during World War II days in Nazi Germany who, by his own later confession, was one of the cowards who refused to speak out against what Hitler and his henchmen began to do with the Jewish people since 1933 when the Nazi stooges desecrated their synagogues, when they smashed in windows and painted yellow stars and the most filthy of statements on Jewish homes. Many pastors refused to take a stand. They didn’t agree with that, but they were so afraid for their own life.

Only about four years ago I found out from one of those old timers who remembered what my grandfather had said, “Did you know that whenever it was in 1938 or 1939, your grandfather got up in that annual testimony meeting and said something to defend the Jewish people?” I said, “No, tell me about it.” He said, “It was the time of Nazi persecution of the Jewish people at their height. He got up from the seat, he just gave one quotation from the Scriptures, John 4:22: ‘Salvation is of the Jews.’ And the congregation held their breath, not knowing what to think of a brave man like that. And the pastor hung his head, red as a beet in shame. This pastor discontinued these

testimony meetings for the rest of the war years, till his successor, [whom I knew] Pastor Pollmer came in.”

That was Hermann Wolf. He was totally unafraid. When the Communists moved in after the Americans had pulled out, the area where I lived was an area first occupied by the Americans and then, unfortunately, the Americans left us and the Russian armies came in. The Russians pilfered the city hall in Falkenstein, the same city hall that my grandfather helped build. They found a list of names; names of families that would be exterminated if Hitler won World War II. The Nazis had it planned down to a T. One of our relatives was the mayor of Falkenstein and he divulged, “You know whose name was up there? Hermann Wolf and family.” Which means that if Hitler had won that war, our lives would have ended at Buchenwald. Somehow the Nazis knew what was going on. God in His grace protected our family in a marvelous way, and my grandfather was permitted to live out his life.

The article to which I referred earlier (and you have at least the headline reproduced on an introductory sheet) is “The Ungracious Hour of the Old Hermann Wolf.” According to our former pastor, only once in his lifetime was Hermann Wolf very ungracious, was very unkind. The pastor relates coming to the house and my grandfather visibly agitated said, “Do you know who was here just 30 minutes ago?” The pastor said, “No.” “It was a former police commander’s wife, Mrs. Müller. And Mrs. Müller wanted me to sign a statement; that her husband, [who was a monster in town, carrying out the Nazi directives] treated you, Mr. Wolf, very humanely because he didn’t send you to an extermination camp.” Because Mr. Müller, the police inspector, had called in my grandfather one day and said, “Hermann Wolf, I know what you’re doing. But have you noticed,” he said with a sarcastic smile on his face, “that your Jewish friends have turned against you one after another? And they were all taken care of?” My grandfather didn’t know what all that meant, but he said, “I will never forget that.” My grandfather remembered that the Nazis had touched God’s anointed, the Jewish people. And now that widow, after World War II, was over, wanted my grandfather to sign a statement that Inspector Müller was very humane. And my grandfather, as sort of a confession related to the past, he said, “Then I screamed at her. I said, ‘Get out, you woman. If I had dogs I would sic them on you.’” The only time, apparently, in his lifetime, my grandfather had been that agitated. He wanted to know from the pastor what he had done wrong. This pastor said, “No. You would have condoned this injustice that was done in the name of the German people by allowing that man to again have a position of responsibility when he should be punished for what he has done.” Thus the ungracious hour in the life of Hermann Wolf.

I last saw my grandfather on February 8, 1952. My father was missing in action, my mother died in 1950, my relatives in the United States, Mr. and Mrs. Loescher who are here; Mr. and Mrs. Wolf who are now in Florida; my aunt in Hartford, my grandfather’s daughter Maria; asked if one of us three children left as orphans from World War II would come to America. When the invitation came, I was the fortunate one to be chosen because my brother had been adopted by a fine Christian couple and my sister as well.

These were difficult times because that section of East Germany where we lived was like a prison within a prison. We lived close to the Iron Curtain. For a period of time we

couldn't even leave our county to go to the next county, because that's where we lived, the Communists had their military installation, radar stations and uranium mines. The iron and silver ores were gone, but they extracted billions of dollars' worth of uranium ore for the atom and hydrogen bombs in the Soviet Union from that area. So we couldn't even go to the next county. We committed the matter to God in prayer. We tried various escape routes; none of them worked. I finally sat down and I wrote a brief letter to the East German government asking them if they would not please grant me an exit permit. I was not even a teenager yet. Would they please allow me to leave because of the death of my parents. I wanted to live with some friends in West Germany, not knowing how long it would take them to get a permit for the United States. The miracle happened. Within three weeks I had an exit permit. I am the only one of all my relatives since World War II who was allowed to leave the "Worker's Paradise." It took my relatives three days to realize this was a genuine exit permit. No one had ever seen one of these precious pieces of paper before. Then they quickly packed my suitcases, then began the farewells. I went to the Kober farm to say farewell to my grandfather and grandmother there.

I knew I would never see them again. Once you leave a Communist country, the move is permanent. Little did I know that in 1957 the East German government would declare general amnesty for anybody who escaped before 1957, no matter how one got out. And there was my grandfather, who wanted to take me to the border. He wanted to be with me as long as possible. I had lived with him those last two and a half years. My brother had lived close by, my sister moved some distance away. And he became more kind during those two years than I'd ever seen him. He never could see any of us having a moment when we didn't have anything to do. He was not just a man of humility, piety and industry, but a man of idiosyncrasies. I think we all are. And as Mrs. Loescher will bear, he always was a workhorse and insisted we were workhorses as well. But he let up a little during those two and a half years. He was so kind and wanted to go with me to the border before the Communists realized what they had done in giving me an exit permit. As it turned out later, it was a bureaucratic blunder on their part and they tried to force me to come back; but by God's grace I was able to stay in West Germany and eventually came to the United States.

On February 8, 1952, we were at the border station of Gutenfürst. The Communists had erected a primitive shed as a railroad station. The vertical wooden boards had wide space in between so the cold winter air and snow blew right in. Just a few people shivered in the cold. Even in those days, the authorities hardly let anyone leave. I was so emotionally upset that, unknown to my grandfather, I went out of the building, sneaked around and deposited in the snow the indigestible food from my stomach. Trying to be a brave young man, I went back in and just continued to talk with my grandfather till the parting moment came. Then I headed on the train westbound for Bavaria, West Germany, where I stayed for a year with some dear friends. He headed back to East Germany.

But on that last day, when he accompanied me to the border, Opa caught a severe cold. That cold developed into pneumonia and on April 16, 1952, he was on his deathbed; no penicillin available, no modern medication. He called all the family around his deathbed, a man who had lived 77 years honoring God, serving God, assured that he would enter

heaven, not because of what he had done, but because of what his Savior had done for him. My brother said, “I wept when we were singing and he called me over and he said, ‘Friedhelm, don’t cry. I am about to have the most wonderful time in my life. I’m going to see the Lord in heaven.’” And then he asked them to sing a song that we all still sing over there, “*Daheim, oh welch ein schönes Wort,*” (“At Home, Oh What A Blessed Word”). And though not everybody has an easy death as my grandfather did, he opened his eyes widely, a smile went across his face as he apparently had a glimpse of that glory that awaited him. He closed his eyes, and his spirit departed for heaven.

On the other hand, his spirit is still very much with us. It remained behind as a wonderful example of a godly individual who, in the face of life-threatening danger, was going to risk his life and that of his family for a cause that he knew to be right. I wish I could say there were millions of people like that, Christians in Germany who tried to help the Jewish people in any way they could. There weren’t. Pastor Pollmer said in his article, “Herman Wolf was one of those rare breed.” It’s not for me to judge how many Germans there were helping the Jews, but I think it does us good to remember there were some, and to remember why they did it. Because they had a love for God, they had a love for God’s Word, and a love for God’s people. I think God honors Grandfather Wolf. Not just right now in heaven as he is rewarded for his faithfulness on earth, but He honors him in the lives of his children. Five children, who grew up, 13 grandchildren; of the 13 of us, six are in the full-time ministry and the others are very actively involved. My cousin Ron is a medical doctor, his wife a nurse at the Holyoke Clinic. Liesbeth, her daughter Evelyn; that’s my grandfather’s granddaughter. Her daughter Becky with two sons Ethan and Philip, great-grandchildren already being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. My family in Iowa, two wonderful godly children.

So the blessings go on and on, and I think we see fulfilled in his life and I think in many lives of godly individuals, the promise that God made to Israel back when He introduced the Ten Commandments to them in Exodus 20. He said in verses 5 and 6 that he would bring iniquity to the third and fourth generation to people that hate Him and that disobey His commandments, to idolatrous people. In Deuteronomy 7:9 the word “generations” is used—God promised blessing to a godly people for a thousand generations.

I think we as a family are blessed because of the godly grandfather who was willing to count the cost and willing to take the stand. Now it is no longer an untold story, but an uncommon saint.

I want to express to you my appreciation for letting me rehearse the life of an unusual man. May he be an example to all of us.

SESSION 3:

SUFFERING SAINTS IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

THE GRACE OF SUFFERING ILLUSTRATED
BY GODLY SAINTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

HOW SAINTS SUBMIT TO SUFFERING
1 PETER 4:12-19

Introduction

Peter writes primarily to gentiles scattered throughout the Roman Empire, encouraging them to be faithful to the Lord in a pagan and hostile society. Their persecution took the form of slander, attacks by local officials and ostracism.

Peter states that theme of 1 Peter in 5:12, “the true grace of God” in the life of the believer. Charles Ryrie, in his *Study Bible*, observes that grace means

1. Security, 1:3-12
2. Sobriety, 1:13-2:10
3. Submission, 2:11-3:12
4. **Suffering, 3:13-4:19**
5. Service, 5:1-18

In 4:12-19 we find reasons why suffering is to be a joyful experience for believers.

1A. Suffering is Commonplace 12

Suffering is not something to be regarded foreign to the believer’s experience, rather, it is a refining test. While Christians in the United States have never really suffered, suffering has been a common experience for believers worldwide down through the ages. In that respect, **the United States is an interlude in history and an island in geography.**

It is fitting to cite below illustrations of Christians in Communist Eastern Europe who rejoiced because they were privileged to suffer for Christ. We dare not forget their heroic stand for the Lord. They serve as a splendid illustration to us of how believers respond amid persecution.

2A. Suffering Will Be Compensated 13

1b. Exposition:

The believers is to rejoice under suffering now because of the “exceeding joy” he will experience when he is someday in the presence of Christ.

2b. Example:

Pastor Pavel Nagy in Doksy, the Czech Republic

The European summer of 1986 was unusually hot. My family and I had returned from our visit to East Germany where we had taken Christian literature. They accompanied me on this ministry every other year. We then made a separate trip into Czechoslovakia to visit the Bartos family whom I had known since 1963. They live about an hour’s drive northeast of Prague, in the picturesque town of Roudnice nad Labem, on the Elbe River. Karel has been a faithful pastor for many years in the Evangelical Brethren Church which traces its spiritual roots back to the Reformer Jan Hus.

Because of the scorching temperatures, Karel decided that we might wish to take a day off from visiting shut-ins and friends and drive to a nearby lake for a day of cool enjoyment. Their two children, Kaja and Daniela are about the age of our Christa and Eric, and we were sure we would enjoy a day of rest from our usual ministry.

Suddenly Karel became concerned. Where would we park the car? If we went to the water for some time, chances are when we returned to the car, it would be stripped of its windshield wipers, tires and battery—a rather common occurrence in that country at that time. Then Karel remembered that in the lakeside town of Doksy, about an hour's drive to the northeast, there was a church of his denomination where we might be able to park our car. He called up the pastor there who immediately agreed that we could leave the car at the parsonage, located a short walk from the lake.

As we set out on our adventure, I was asked to drive again. My friends insisted that I had lots more driving experience than they.

Apparently Pastor Pavel Nagy was looking for us, because as we approached the parsonage, the large cast-iron gates swung open and he motioned us to drive around the back of the house, away from the prying eyes of the neighbors across the street, who were most likely informers for the Communist government. They would customarily copy down every license number of every car that stopped at the church.

We were introduced to Pastor Nagy and his wife, a very pleasant couple near retirement age. They are both of Hungarian extraction, thus the name Nagy. Our friend Karel handed them a large bag of various Christian literature items, part of the sizable amount of Czech literature which we had brought in by train from Nuremberg just a few days before.

We four adults and four children enjoyed the cool water of the lake. We swam around in the water and then rented a boat for about an hour. After that, we returned to the parsonage where a most happy Brother Nagy met us at the door. Both pastors became involved in a very animated discussion in the Czech language. I finally slowed them down. They both are fluent in German. I said, "Would you please explain to me what you are so happy about?" My pastor friend from Roudnice said, "They are gone! They are gone!" I said, "What is gone?" He said, "All the literature!" I said, "The booklets and tracts and books we brought along?" "Yes!" Then Pastor Nagy said, "See the grocery store diagonally across the street? While you were gone, a truck pulled up to deliver something. We never know what is being delivered, but we always get in line. There's a long line that forms before we know what's being sold. If we don't need it, our uncle or cousin will. I saw that as a sign from the Lord. You had just given me all these good gospel books and booklets in our language. I felt that I should go across the street and share them with the people. So I got in line with my bag. Then I went up to the front of the line, putting a gospel tract into every bag." You always bring your own bag, at least you used to, in the days of Communist rule.

And then he said, "I turned around and the line was forming in back of me. I gave each individual standing in line a gospel tract and the amazing thing is, nobody rejected it!" "But," I said, "this is a Communist country. Some of the townspeople are undoubtedly informers. I'm sure in the line of people there were individuals who were going to inform on you. They get brownie points from the government, so they are going to tell on you for what you've done." Brother Nagy's response, "So?" Brother Nagy was about 70 years old at that time. His response

was, “I have served,” (and this is where the suffering from 1 Peter 4 fits in) “I have served the Lord in a Communist society for all these years, and how many years do you think I have left? And even if something happens to me, don’t you think the Lord will make it worth my while? I am so delighted I had those literature items to share with them.”

As it turned out, providentially he was not turned in to the authorities. He took a stand. Everyone took a gospel tract. Who knows whether these people ever had an item of gospel literature in their hands?

We were ready to drive back to Roudnice, but because we were thirsty, we were invited upstairs to our friends’ very rustic apartment. We could tell these were extremely poor people but very much satisfied in the Lord.

We drank some milk in their humble kitchen, since it was not advisable to drink their town water. Before we left, Pastor Nagy gave me a piece of rock with a Scripture verse painted on it. He pointed through his kitchen window up to a hill about eight miles away, crowned by an imposing fortress, the Bezdez Castle. He said, “I’ve climbed up to that castle and brought that rock back. You take it to America as a reminder that our God is as solid as that rock on which that castle’s built. You can depend on Him for life and for eternity.”

I’ve visited these dear folks many times since. As far as I know, nobody from the Western world has ever been to their humble home. Thus it is very special for them to have visitors from America. Normally when I come, they all gather together, even if it is during the week. There is the pastor and his wife. His son is a judge in a family court; one of his daughters is a concert pianist and the other daughter is a nurse in a hospital for mentally challenged people. The judge throws a couple of cases out of court so he can come. The concert pianist cancels practice, and the nurse gives the patients some sedatives, so we can meet. All this so they can have a few hours of fellowship with their friend from the United States.

3A. Suffering is Commendable 14

1b. Exposition:

Peter relates suffering to a beatitude:

“happy are you,” 3:14 – don’t be afraid or troubled

“happy are you,” 4:14 – because you will receive special grace

Suffering saints often radiate outwardly the evidence of the indwelling

Holy Spirit. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was said to have “the face of an angel” (Acts 16:15).

2b. Example:

Gudrun Pfeiffer and her parents in Jägerswald near Werda, East Germany.

Just to the north of the Czech Republic lies my home country, Germany. One of the largest provinces is Saxony. The Vogtland is my home county. You may be familiar with the largest cities in Saxony such as Dresden, or perhaps Leipzig and Zwickau. I was born in Zwickau. The Vogtland is a lovely mountainous area in a corner of southwestern East Germany, bordered by Bavaria and the Czech Republic. All during the Iron Curtain years we were never more than 40 miles from West Germany; but of course, we could never get there. Falkenstein is my home town. Nearby is Werda. On Sunday afternoon my grandfather used to walk

with my mother and us three children to a church service where he was the exhorter. My family were very conservative Methodists. We became well acquainted with the folks in these little outlying congregations. My grandfather had a close friend in the church in Werda who lived in a remote spot in the forest called Jägerswald (Hunter's Forest). He and his family lived in a house built 450 years ago by a forest ranger. Walter Pfeiffer, his wife Klärle and their daughter Gudrun called this quaint place their home for many years.

In 1 Peter 4:14, we are told if we are reproached for the name of Christ, we are happy, and there would be an aura of glory upon us. Many people have observed that when you meet people from Eastern Europe, no matter who, if they are believers and have suffered for the sake of Christ, they often radiate outwardly the evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This has been especially true of the Pfeiffer family.

On my Reformation Tour, one reason people so enjoyed meeting my relatives and friends in East Germany is because there is something special about them. They have suffered for their faith, and you can tell that by looking at their radiant faces.

I visited the godly Pfeiffer family many times in their humble home. Their daughter Gudrun is now along in years. The entryway to the ancient home is so low, I never could enter the home erect. People must have been shorter 400 years ago. I asked my friends there repeatedly to remove the cross beam above the door so I could walk in straight but they have never yet listened. When you visit there, you never leave unless a) you have been served some coffee b) Gudrun sits at the pump organ and you sing some Christian songs and c) you enjoy some of the home-baked pound cake. One finds an aura of fellowship and blessing in that home that is difficult to find elsewhere. Occasionally we've had American friends join us for our ministry in East Germany. We always try take them out into the forest to the remote cottage of Jägerswald. One special visit there with my family in 1969 stands out. As we entered the living room, Gudrun said, "Manfred, you and your family sit down. I have a story to tell to you."

We settled back on the ancient couch and listened to her remarkable account. She said, "You know last year the Communist troops invaded the Czech Republic. The Czech leader, Alexander Dubcek had tried to ease the yoke of Russian oppression in what was called 'The Prague Spring.' In response, the Kremlin took drastic action. Thousands of Russian and East German troops were stationed around the forest just north of the Czech border. The Russians then went into the Czech Republic but the East Germans were not allowed to go there. But they were stationed here between our home and the next town, about a 40-minute walk away. I really didn't know what to do. I have to work in town, in Werda." (She walks 40 minutes through the forest to get to her place of work and 40 minutes back.) "And we prayed about it, and my parents and I said, the Lord will protect me."

Then Gudrun continued her riveting narrative. In the morning she walked her usual way to work and she noticed German troops from the Volksarmee, about 1,000 soldiers, camped in the forest. At the end of the day, she came back through the forest. It was getting dark. Suddenly somebody tapped her on the shoulder.

She was startled by the soldier emerging from behind a tree. He politely asked her, “Do you go to work there every day?” She said, “Yes I do.” He said, “Would you do us soldiers a favor? We have no communication with our loved ones back home. Our wives and sweethearts have no idea whether we are fighting and dying in the Czech Republic. They have no idea where we are. Would you take some letters from us to mail in town tomorrow, thus giving our loved ones information that we are just fine?” Gudrun promised that she would and for a number of weeks she became an angel of mercy to them. The relatives of the soldiers wrote in care of her mailbox in town and she brought mail back at the end of the day. The scheme worked flawlessly.

She and her parents knew that this situation was brought about by the Lord in order that they might have an opportunity to witness to these soldiers. And what they did, interestingly, was to invite these soldiers into their home. Over a period of six weeks, they had 600 soldiers in their house. The Pfeiffers kept the bath water hot by heating the water tank with wood or soft coal briquettes. The soldiers were invited in, one after another, to take a hot, refreshing bath. They were invited into the living room, where they had a cup of coffee with some pound cake. Coffee in those days cost the equivalent of \$5.90 a cup, or \$65 a pound, thus this was a very special treat.) Then they sang some songs with them and gave them their testimony. As a result of these soldiers coming to their house, a good number of them were saved.

As Gudrun related her story, she brought out a stack of mail that had accumulated during the past year after the events happened. These soldiers had written thank you notes back to that humble family, expressing their appreciation that somebody was willing to tell them that not Communism but Christ was able to answer their basic needs and gave them a peace that they had never known.

As these former soldiers got married, they sent their wedding pictures. As they were blessed with children, the Pfeiffers, of course, would get baby pictures. It was just wonderful to see how the Lord used that one family in a 450-year-old house, way out in the forest, to witness to over 600 soldiers. And they kept up the contact for years. You see, unbeknownst to anyone except my brother and my family, much of the Christian literature we took over there ended up with Gudrun. She mailed the encouraging literature to these former soldiers. They would keep the book for about three weeks. Then these soldiers would return the item and soon would receive another book. So Gudrun became, in effect, the local lending library, way out in the forest. Amazingly, but not surprisingly, none of contacts ever turned the Pfeiffers over to the Stasi, the dreaded secret police.

As you might gather, there is something special about these people, people. Gudrun and her parents were dedicated believers, ready to witness whenever they had an opportunity. One could just tell that they were willing to suffer for the Lord and God the Holy Spirit gave them a special aura of glory, as Peter predicted.

Walter and Klärle are enjoying the presence of their Lord. Gudrun, now in her late 80's, still resides at that special place called Jägerswald.

4A. **Suffering is Christ-like** 15-16

1b. Exposition:

Much suffering is the result of punishment for misdeeds. Peter lists four sins that believers are capable of committing. It seems that each sin mentioned actually represents a category:

Murderer — violation of the sanctity of life

Thief – violation of property

Evil Doer – violation of harmony

Meddler – violation of privacy

The term “busybody in other men’s matters” is the translation of the Greek *allotriepiskopos*, a word which may have been coined by the Apostle Peter. If believers suffer, they should do so not as criminals but as Christians, not as evil doers but as earnestly dedicated to Christ.

2b. Example:

Examples abound of believers under Communism who suffered for being believers, sometimes glorifying God through martyrdom.

Frieda Schnabel, my great aunt, a faithful witness in her senior citizen home and thus persecuted.

In our text, Peter says—if you suffer, suffer as a Christian. This is only one out of three times the word “Christian” is used in the Bible: in Acts 26:28, “almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian”; in Acts 11:26, they were first called Christians in Antioch; and here in 1 Peter 4:15-16. A Christian is simply one who follows Christ. Peter’s inspired injunction is, “Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on his behalf.”

My father never returned from the war. When my mother passed away, my brother and sister were adopted by fine Christian people. Before I came to America, I lived with my godly grandfather. **Frieda Schnabel**, our great aunt, lived just half a block around the corner. Even when my brother and sister still were home, my great aunt would invite me over to her third-floor apartment. She would wrap me up in a blanket on the couch, especially when the weather got cold. Then she would take her copper hot water bottle and put it at my feet. Then she began to “torture” me, by sitting there and quoting almost endlessly, poems she had learned in her childhood. They were good Christian poems, such as *Der Sieg der Liebe* (The Victory of Love). She also recited long passages of Scripture. After enduring the recitations for about thirty minutes, I suddenly remembered that my grandfather wanted me back at our place to make kindling wood for the fire for the next day. But this lady had an incredible memory and she memorized much in her childhood. And what she memorized in her childhood, God used in her old age to be a witness.

What happened was this: Once I had left for the United States, and Tante Frieda had gotten along in years, and she was put in an old folks’ home in the nearby town of Wernesgrün, named for a famous beer, Wernesgrüner Pilsner (though I never touch the beverage). The town lies about 10 miles from where we lived. But

for my great aunt it might as well have been in another world. Tante Frieda was placed in the senior citizen home, which was a stately old mansion confiscated by the Communists from a rich industrialist family in town.

I had gone to the United States in 1953. When I came back to Germany after not being home for ten years, I studied at the University of Erlangen in West Germany and began to visit relatives and friends in East Germany. Tante Frieda was one of the main persons I wanted to see because she always had been so kind to me. I visited her during my first visit. On my second trip back home, I was ready to see her again. I went to our church on Sunday. Our second cousin, Johannes Schnabel, was the pastor in my home church of Falkenstein. I mentioned to him after the service, as we shook hands at the door, "I'm going to see Tante Frieda on Wednesday." His response, "I wish you had come a few days earlier." I said, "Why?" He said, "Haven't you heard? Tante Frieda died four days ago." I said, "How can that be?! She seemed to be in robust health. Her heart was as strong as could be." He said, "Why don't you wait until all the people are gone. I'll talk to you privately." He continued shaking hands with the parishioners as he said goodbye to them.

Then he took me aside. He said, "Look, Frieda had a strong physical body, but her mind was going. They put her on the fourth floor of that building, knowing she couldn't walk down the stairs, so she was limited to one floor. What Frieda did was this: when she felt well enough, she would go from room to room to visit folks. She recited passages of Scripture and quoted Christian poetry. She asked each person she encountered, with a deep, entreating voice, (and I remember her saying it to me, too) '*Liebst Du meinen Jesus?*' (Do you love my Jesus?) Most of the old folks in that quite dreadful place never had anyone come to visit them. They just loved Tante Frieda and appreciated her visits. But the doctors and nurses were convinced and callous Communists. They hated what she did. That's why they consigned her up there. It was a smelly place. I won't even attempt to describe the odor once you got up there. But Tante Frieda, while her mind was failing, could recite Scripture and quote poetry. She was a real blessing to those folks who shared that upstairs floor with her."

Then Johannes continued, "You know how she was hated by the personnel in that senior citizen home. I visited her last Wednesday. She was as healthy as could be. The next day, she was dead. I can't prove it, but you know the situation in our country. I dare say one of the nurses gave her an injection that caused her death. I cannot prove that this is the case, but that would be the most likely scenario."

Tante Frieda died because of her love for the Lord. She apparently died a martyr's death. Why? Because she suffered as a Christian. Right now she is enjoying the presence of the Lord in glory, knowing that someday the Lord will compensate her at the judgment seat of Christ.

5A. Suffering is Conditioning 17-18

The believer's suffering is not retributive but refining. His judgment is not a punishment but a purging. Peter contrasts the discipline of disciples with the doom of the disobedient sinner. The chastisement of

believers should prompt **gratitude**; their suffering results in **glory**, but the judgment of the sinner results in **gloom** and eternal doom. The salvation of saints is not in doubt but sin and Satan make it difficult for them to believe (v. 18). If difficulty besets the salvation of the disciples, disaster characterizes the fate of the disobedient.

6A. **Suffering is Consoling** 19

1b. Exposition:

The believer suffering according to the will of God commits himself to God, much as Christ did on the cross (Lk. 23:46). God is only here called “creator” in the New Testament. He is called the “faithful creator,” a most comforting thought for suffering saints and a wonderful reminder. “Faithful” relates to His love: there is no doubt of His affection and interest. “Creator” relates to His power: there is no doubt of His ability.

2b. Example:

Martha Löscher, my aunt, in Ellefeld, Saxony

Frau Martha Löscher was my mother’s sister. We affectionately called her Tante Marthel. Her life graphically illustrates how humble believers can find comfort and strength in the midst of suffering and persecution.

Whenever I visited East Germany, I would bring for my relatives gospel literature items which they would share with others. While the Communists prohibited the East German believers from sharing their faith with others in public, the Christians there believed that when it came to the sharing of the gospel, they would obey God rather than man, using Peter and the apostles as an example (Acts 5:29).

During my visits I normally would spend the first few days with Tante Marthel and her family, who had taken in my brother as one of their own. Every time as I unpacked my suitcases, Tante Marthel and her daughter Maria each asked to get the majority of the tracts. At times I had to take them back and carefully count out the items so that all the five or six individuals would have an equal amount to distribute.

Much like Pastor Nagy in the Czech Republic, Tante Marthel, whenever she went shopping, would take along literature items to give to the other shoppers, queued up. Her unafraid witness for her Lord almost led to her imprisonment on several occasions.

As mentioned above, on my visits back home I would initially stay with Tante Marthel, her husband Arnold and the children. It must have been around 1985, during my yearly visit, that Tante Marthel related a most recent and interesting incident.

She recounted that just before I arrived she was hospitalized for a minor operation. She shared the hospital room with seven other ladies, typical for health care under Communism. Before she was admitted, Tante Marthel decided that she

would take some Christian literature items with her and try to witness to the other ladies. The literature might well have been some of the sermon booklets by Dr. M. R. DeHaan, translated into the German language. I used to take large quantities with me, made available to me free of charge by our Baptist Mid-Missions missionaries in Bavaria.

After the operation, as she recovered for several days, she would read these booklets. As she expected, one by one the ladies in the room with her, curious what she was reading, asked if they could borrow her reading material. She gladly shared the requested booklets with them. All the ladies except one asked for the materials. My aunt said they were all a little suspicious because this lady in a corner bed kept very much to herself and sometimes when some of the ladies were out of the room, the doctors or nurses would come in and whisper with that withdrawn person. Tante Marthel surmised that perhaps this lady was a government informer. How right she was!

My aunt related that only a day or two after she came home from the hospital, an officer from the dreaded Volkspolizei came to the door and said, “Frau Löscher, we expect to see you at the police headquarters in Auerbach on Thursday at 7 a.m. Then he left without further explanation. No one in the family was in any doubt as to what prompted this disturbing visit. Uncle Arnold assured his wife that he would go with her. She, however, fully trusting in God’s help, told him that he was needed at his place of business. She would go, but would not be alone. Said she, “The Lord Jesus Christ will go with me.”

By bus she arrived at the county police headquarters. She was ushered through a door, then a hallway and yet another door, which led into a large conference room. Three stern-faced officers sat around the massive conference table, but at the end where she was ushered to sit, in semi-circular fashion, the entire assortment of her religious publications which she had shared at the hospital had been recovered. The suspicious lady obviously informed on Tante Marthel and the police went to the various homes of the ladies who had requested the reading material, which they had been invited to take home to their families. The police retrieved every single item.

The interrogation was rather brief. They demanded to know whether these were her items. She said they were. “Where did you get those?” She skillfully and truthfully answered that from time to time friends from Switzerland (a neutral country) mailed her helpful booklets. Also visitors from West Germany and other countries brought Christian booklets with them. Then she noted that in their country, the DDR, the constitution guarantees religious freedom.

They told her that it was true they had religious freedom but citizens were not allowed to force their religious opinions on other people. My aunt told them that since the officers obviously talked to the ladies who were in the hospital room with her, the women would have told them that she did not force those booklets on them. In fact, they are the ones who requested to read the material. Of course, they had to acknowledge that this was true. As the interrogation concluded, they issued a final, ominous threat. “Frau Löscher, no matter what you may think about sharing religious matters with others, if we ever determine that you have tried to

influence others with your religious ideas, it will be problematic for you. We know you have a husband and four children. But one more transgression on your part and we promise to imprison you for five years.”

This is the account from my aunt. She concluded her report with a question, “Manfred, do you have any gospel tracts for me this time?”

My aunt, as many Iron Curtain believers, was willing to face hardships and persecution in her faithful witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. The sterling testimony of believers behind the Iron Curtain amidst persecution, hardships and difficulties should be an example to us. They found the secret of Deuteronomy 33:25, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” These saints took the Savior at His Word, “My strength is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. 12:9).

For the believer enduring persecution — indeed for every earnest believer — three principles can be inferred from the passage:

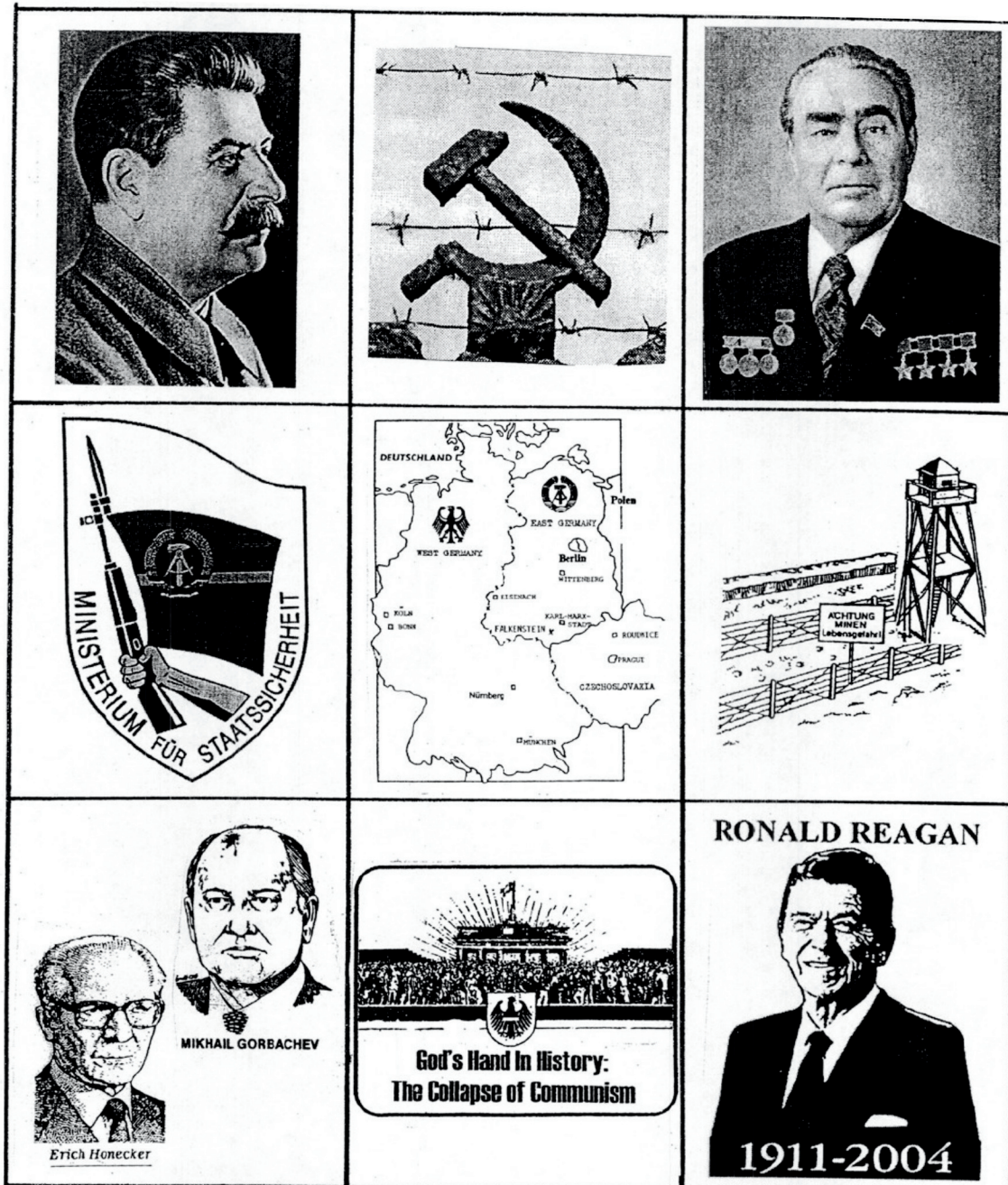
- 1. Declare the Savior**, v. 14 exalt “the name of Christ”
- 2. Depend on the Spirit**, v. 14 “the spirit of glory and God resteth upon you”
- 3. Determine to stand**, v. 16 “be not ashamed”

God as faithful creator knows, cares and is able to sustain the believer. Therefore, rejoice in the suffering (13, 14) and glorify the Savior (13, 14, 16).

SESSION 4:

GOD'S HAND IN HISTORY

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE COLLAPSE OF
COMMUNISM AND THE IRON CURTAIN



God's Hand in History:

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM and THE IRON CURTAIN

1A. THE DREADFUL ERECTION OF THE IRON CURTAIN

2A. THE DEADLY EFFICIENCY OF THE FORMIDABLE BARRIER

3A. THE DRAMATIC EXODUS OF EAST GERMANS TO THE WEST

4A. THE DEDICATED EVANGELICALS AT PRAYER

5A. THE DESPERATE EFFORT OF THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT

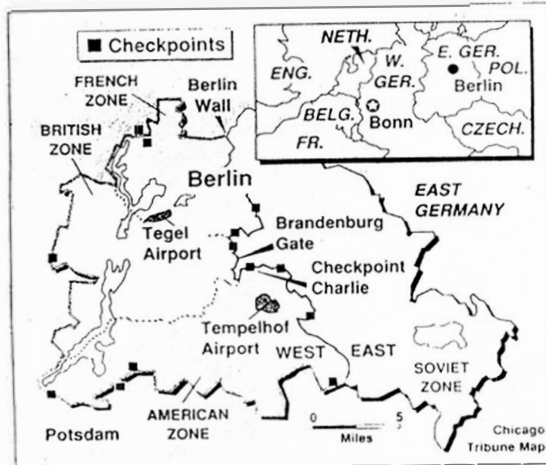
6A. THE DELIGHTFUL EXPLOSION OF FREEDOM

7A. THE DIVINE EVIDENCE IN THE DEMISE OF COMMUNISM

• EASTERN EUROPE
An Irresistible Tide
With Moscow's apparent acquiescence, reformers in Bulgaria and protesters in Czechoslovakia follow East Germany in pressing for democracy



The Berlin Wall: 1961-89



WORLD: An irresistible tide is sweeping the East bloc as reformers in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia follow the East German lead in pressing for democracy

Thousands of demonstrators shake the remaining hard-line regimes.

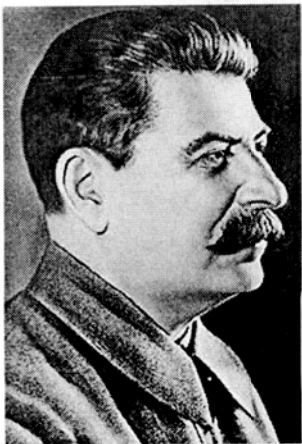
GOD'S HAND IN HISTORY: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM

In this age filled with turmoil, terrorism and tragedies, many Americans are fearful about their own destiny, that of their country and the world. Instead of facing the future with fear and doubt, the believer should face the future with fortitude and confidence. Though it might not seem that way at times, God is very much in control of the course of human history, as He is of our personal destiny.

One of the most splendid proofs for God's sovereignty in human affairs is afforded by the dramatic disintegration of world Communism. The sudden and unanticipated liberation of millions of enslaved people serves as a vivid illustration of the ability of God to reverse totally and suddenly a most dreadful situation as He worked out His sovereign plan and that, apparently, in response to fervent prayers. The dramatic and complete collapse of Communism serves as an illustration of God's firm control of world events. Be the human condition or world situation ever so bleak or desperate, God is able to reverse a seemingly hopeless situation at any time He so chooses. God is concerned what transpires in our life and nation and is competent to act. This allows us to have faith in the future. The untold story of the collapse of Communism fortifies that faith.

1A. The Dreadful Erection of the Iron Curtain

In the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union, an ally of the United States during the war, became a major world power. Its military enslavement of Eastern Europe resulted in the formation of a monstrous empire with the aim of exploiting its satellites for slave labor.

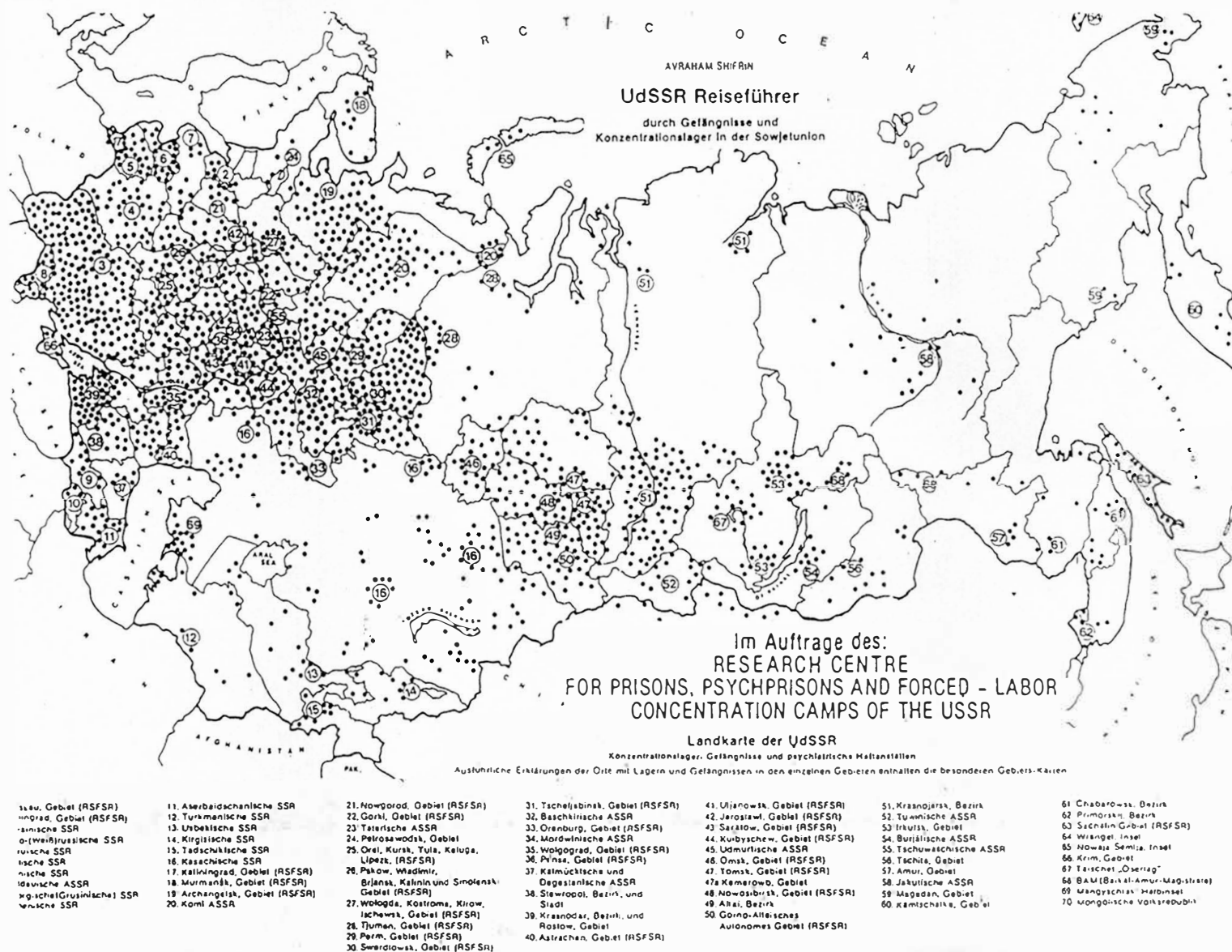


The oppressive Communist regime of Stalin continued the state terrorism of Lenin and made an effort to eradicate all opposition. Whole nationalities such as the Kazakhs, Kulaks and Tartars were eliminated. Under Khrushchev, 10 million Ukrainians died of starvation when their fields were burned. Scattered over the vast country were concentration camps, penal institutions and psychiatric hospitals for that vast segment of the population considered to be enemies of the State. Avraham Shifrin, who was incarcerated in a number of these penal institutions, wrote an important volume, *The First Guidebook to Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Soviet Union*, demonstrating that there were over 2,000 concentration camps. At one time or another, some 65 million Soviet citizens suffered in these camps. Alexandr Solzhenitsyn wrote from personal experience and prodigious



Alexandr Solzhenitsyn

research about his experiences in his acclaimed work on penal camps. His horrifying three-volume *Gulag Archipelago* became an immediate best-seller.

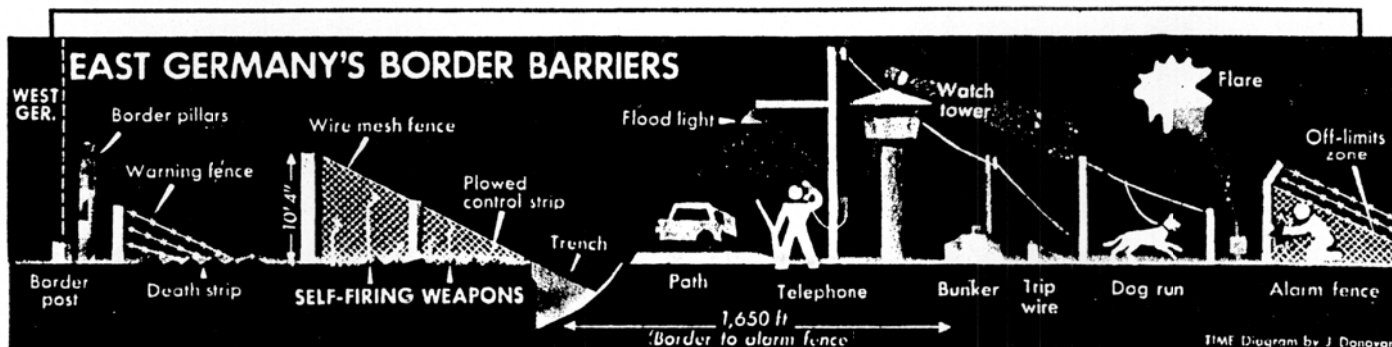


Internally, Khrushchev and his successor Brezhnev repressed any form of dissent. Outwardly they expanded the Communist empire to ever more countries, especially the African continent. Many of us remember the adage concerning Khrushchev: "Khrushchev is a man of peace, this we all recall; a piece of this and a piece of that, until he has it all!" We further recall his shoe-banging temper tantrums in the United Nations and his threats against the United States of America, vowing that our grandchildren would live under Communism.

In the Soviet satellites the puppet regimes, all under the thumb of the slave masters in the Kremlin, made sure that the disenfranchised citizens were unable to

leave their "worker's paradise." To prevent the escape of citizens from the Communist to free nations, Soviet puppet regimes began building around 1949 a formidable barrier, extending between slave and free nations. This border, some 2,500 miles in length, dubbed by Winston Churchill the Iron Curtain, was deadliest between East and West Germany.

The city of Berlin provided the only escape route for East German citizens as they walked from the eastern part of the city, under Russian control, to the western part of the city, occupied by American, French and British forces. In 1961, because of ever more repressive measures of the Communist regime, a veritable flood of escapees, numbering 2,500 per day, voted with their feet for freedom. To stop this hemorrhaging to West Berlin, an island of freedom located inside a Communist sea, the so-called German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) began building the infamous Berlin Wall. The construction of this barrier effectively closed off the last escape valve from this Communist prison.



BY far the most visible and redoubtable monument to the cold war remains the 840-mile barricade of barbed wire, minefields, watchtowers and armed police that has constituted the frontier between divided Germany for two decades. In spite of the political *détente* that is expected to arise from the recent state treaty signed by the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, East German authorities are reinforcing the deadly barrier. In recent months, for example, workmen have been methodically replacing the barbed wire fences with new gratings; their mesh is too fine to climb.

Such grim improvements in the barrier are clearly designed to discourage East Germans, 871 of whom escaped last year, from interpreting *détente* as a license to flee to the West. Other recent innovations will relieve East German border guards of any problem of conscience they might have. Although guards are under orders to shoot to kill would-be escapees on sight, some have apparently looked the other way or deliberately avoided hitting their

compatriots. The East Germans have now equipped sections of the barrier with automatic self-firing weapons, mounted on three levels so that anyone seeking to jump the fence will trigger a shower of bullets.

Where there are no self-firing weapons, second and third fences have been laid behind the frontier barrier with buried mines and a deep concrete-plated ditch between them. This type of fortification is intended to prevent a favorite escape maneuver: crashing through the barricade with a heavy car. Along certain sections of the border, the fences farthest away from the frontier are now equipped with electrified barbed wire that, when touched, alerts nearby border-control posts by optical and acoustical signals. Floodlights along populated sections of the frontier have long afforded West Germans a permanent panorama of escape attempts. Although such attempts have become suicidal, they are expected to continue. From now on, however, the new double barricades will help hide the spectacle from Western eyes.

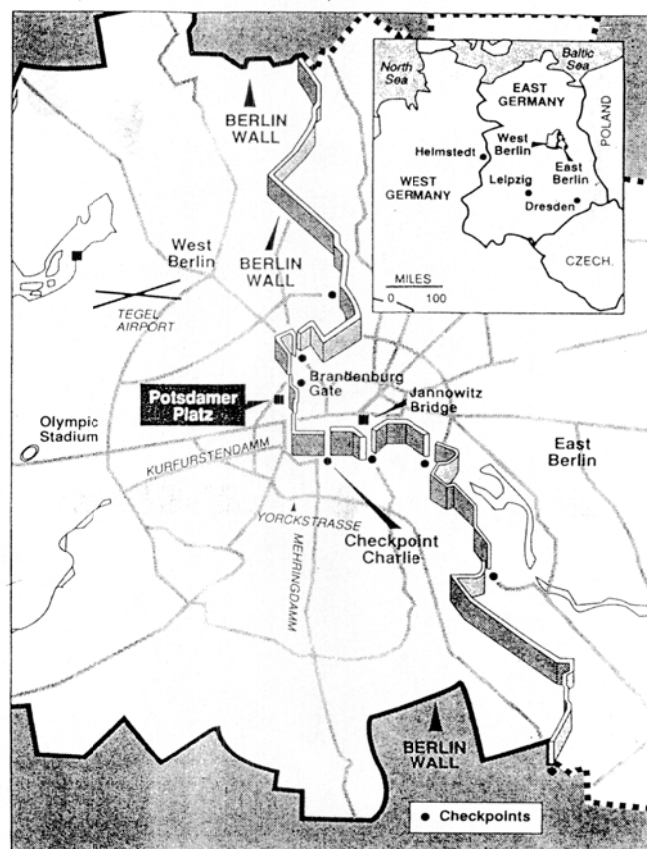
2A. The Deadly Efficiency of the Formidable Barrier

In subsequent years the Berlin Wall, as well as the 800-mile-long barrier between East and West Germany, were fortified more and more. Despite this deadly barrier, desperate individuals still attempted to escape their Communist slave masters. Many times their valiant efforts resulted in death. At least 380 individuals lost their lives in this fashion, either along the 35-mile barrier separating East and West Berlin or the 840-mile-long border, like an ugly scar disfiguring the German countryside.

In Berlin, the crude wall initially constructed of concrete blocks was replaced with a 10-foot-high wall comprised of concrete slabs and crowned with a round pipe, effectively preventing a hand-hold for anyone attempting to scale the wall. In fact, a second parallel wall, some 100 yards inside East Berlin, made it impossible for anyone to approach the westernmost wall. Individuals found within the space between the two walls, an area brightly illuminated at night, would be shot by ruthless border guards.

As noted earlier, West Berlin was an island of freedom surrounded by a Communist sea. Berlin was actually located 118 miles eastward of the border separating West from East Germany. The wall separated the two parts of the city itself, but the rest of the free city of West Berlin was also surrounded by formidable fortifications comprised of fences, mine fields and watch towers.

The formidable barrier separating the two parts of the country became ever more impenetrable, expanded to a three-mile-wide no-man's land protected with fences, dog runs, watch towers, bunkers, booby traps and mine fields. On the actual border fence for extensive stretches, automatic self-shooting weapons were installed at head level, belly level and leg level.

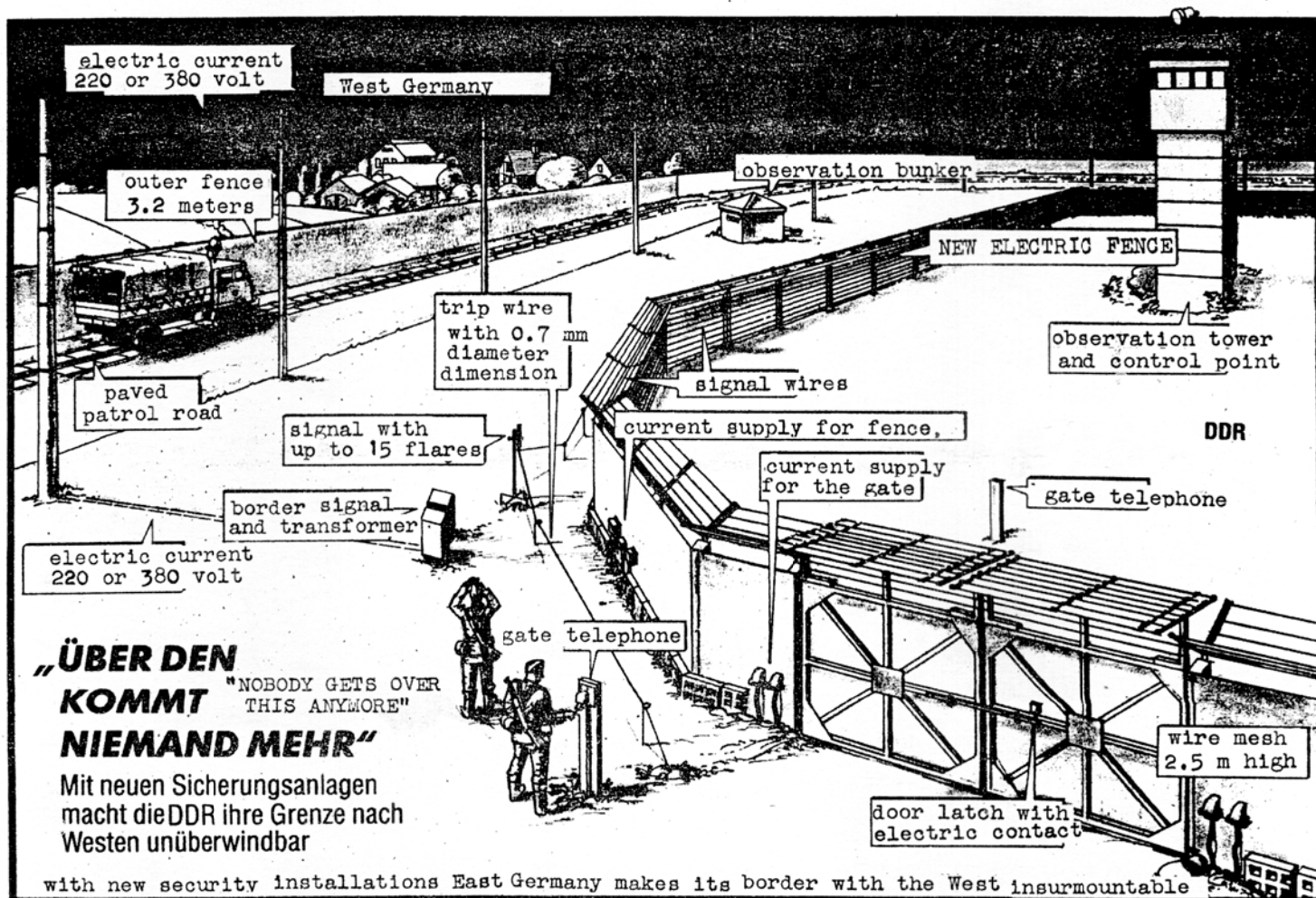
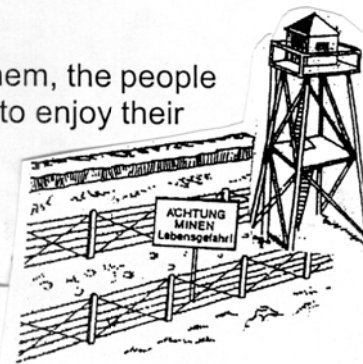


The New York Times/Nov. 13, 1989

The most closely guarded points along the border were the crossing points from West to East Germany for automobiles and trains, three of each. Regular visitors to East Germany, like this writer, could observe the increasingly deadly nature of the border fortifications, making any escape attempt a suicidal venture. Virtually

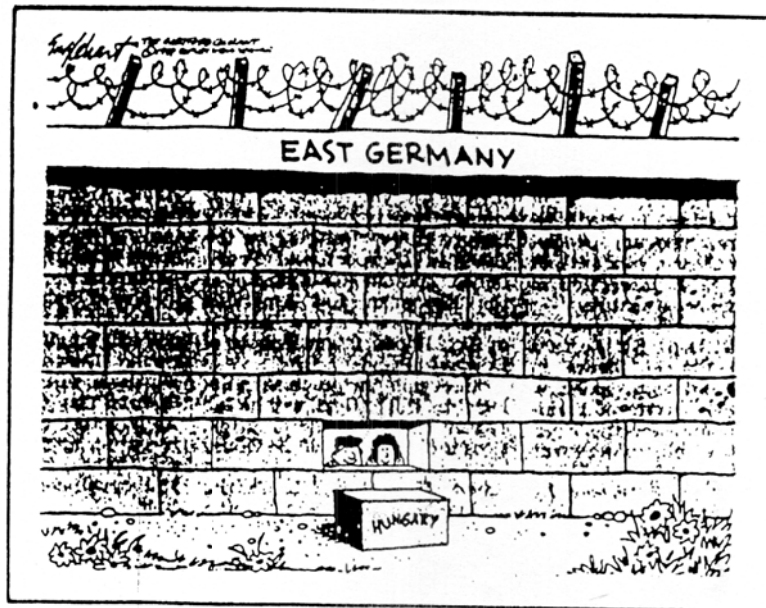
the only East Germans permitted to visit the free western part or Federal Republic of Germany, were citizens who had reached the coveted retirement age, which was 60 for women and 65 for men. They were readily granted visas to visit friend or relatives for three weeks. All the young people, longing for a taste of freedom, had figured out how many years, months and weeks were left until they could make their first trip to free West Germany, a place they only knew from television programs.

Once the state had exacted from its serfs the labor deemed due them, the people could leave, though many, broken in body and spirit, were unable to enjoy their few weeks of freedom.



3A. The Dramatic Exodus of East Germans to the West

In the summer of 1989, while the German Democratic Republic was preparing to celebrate its 40th anniversary, the Communist government of Hungary did something that altered the status quo in Europe in a dramatic way. Having always imposed less stringent travel restrictions on its citizens than did other countries in the Communist camp, the Hungarian government decided, much to the horror of its Communist neighbors, to remove the border posts and barbed wire fences on their western border to Austria. As the Austrian television news filmed, the brave Hungarians removed the hated barrier with wire cutters. As the amazing events unfolded on West German television, East German young people immediately began a virtual migration southward. The East German young people were suddenly overcome with an inordinate desire to vacation in Hungary. Obtaining a tourist visa from their government, they started a mass migration to the Hungarian/Austrian border. Who can blame them for making a break for freedom?



Driving mostly their diminutive Trabant cars, (known as the “car of the philosopher. . .because you think you have a car”), they drove directly to the opening in the Austrian/Hungarian border and leaving their precious cars, for which the average waiting time had been fifteen years, they walked to freedom in

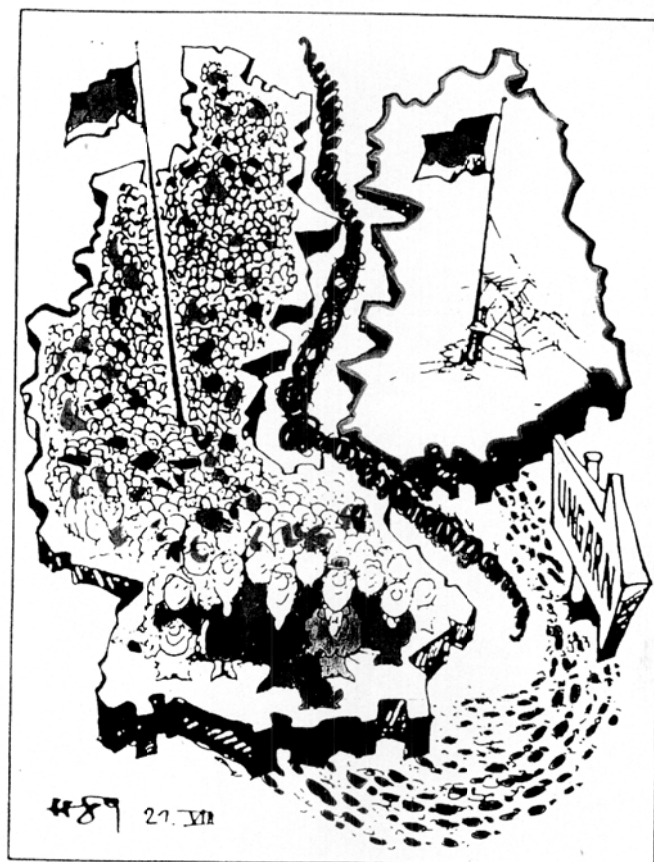


Refugees stream into Austria

Austria. Even as the Hungarian side of the border became the world's largest parking lot, East German young people were given quick and safe passage through Austria on their way to West Germany. Within hours, many were in the free part of Berlin just hundreds of yards away from their vacant apartments in the eastern part of the city.

During that fateful summer of 1989, thousands of Germans, mostly well educated young people and professionals, made this trek to freedom. Sometimes the consequences for East Germany were catastrophic. This writer's nephew, just beginning his medical studies, was called upon to work in a hospital where, rightly or wrongly, every doctor and nurse had opted for freedom.

The German government was enraged because of Hungary's unilateral decision. Hungary, in turn, refused to close the border to Austria but instead sealed its border with Czechoslovakia. The East German government also sealed its southern border with Czechoslovakia, thus trapping tens of thousands of East Germans within Czechoslovakia. They could not return to their homes in East Germany, nor could they continue to Hungary and thence to freedom. The western news media portrayed their desperate plight. By the thousands they attempted to scale the fence at the West German embassy in Prague while frustrated Czech policemen tried to hold them back. Soon the number of refugees exceeded five thousand, with



Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung

standing room only in a small area, the torrential rains turning the embassy grounds into a muddy mess.

With world attention on the heart-wrenching scenes in Prague and East Germany desperately trying to save its face as its 40-year anniversary festivities were approaching, the East German government sent so-called "freedom trains" to Prague, which transported the refugees to West Germany.

Waves of East German refugees toast freedom as Hungary opens gates



DDR-Flüchtlinge in der Bonner Botschaft in Prag 1989: „Das Politbüro hat gewußt, wie tief es in dem Sumpf sitzt!“



Rather than selecting the shortest route, the devious East German officials insisted that the trains go through Eastern Germany, with secret police boarding the trains to confiscate everyone's passport and identification papers. Thanks to the presence of West German government officials on the trains, brutal acts by the Communist bullies were kept to a minimum. As the trains slowed down in major East German cities, numerous alert young people climbed aboard, making for considerably crowded and

unsanitary conditions. After an agonizingly slow ride of 24 hours, the trains arrived in Hof, West Germany, where thousands of West Germans welcomed their brothers and sisters from the east, showering them with food and drink, of which they had been deprived for days.



As soon as the first freedom trains left Prague, thousands of other individuals sought refuge in the West German embassy. Thus other freedom trains were dispatched to take another 5,000 refugees to West Germany. As the train slowed down again in cities such as Dresden and Chemnitz, and individuals were anxious to climb aboard as at the first time, Communist police were waiting for them and beat them mercilessly to the ground. Large puddles of blood on the train platform testified to the brutality of the Communist goons against individuals whose only crime was the desire to be free.

When the last freedom train crossed the border into West Germany, the Iron Curtain seemed to close permanently. The Communist dictator Erich Honecker defiantly declared that the Berlin



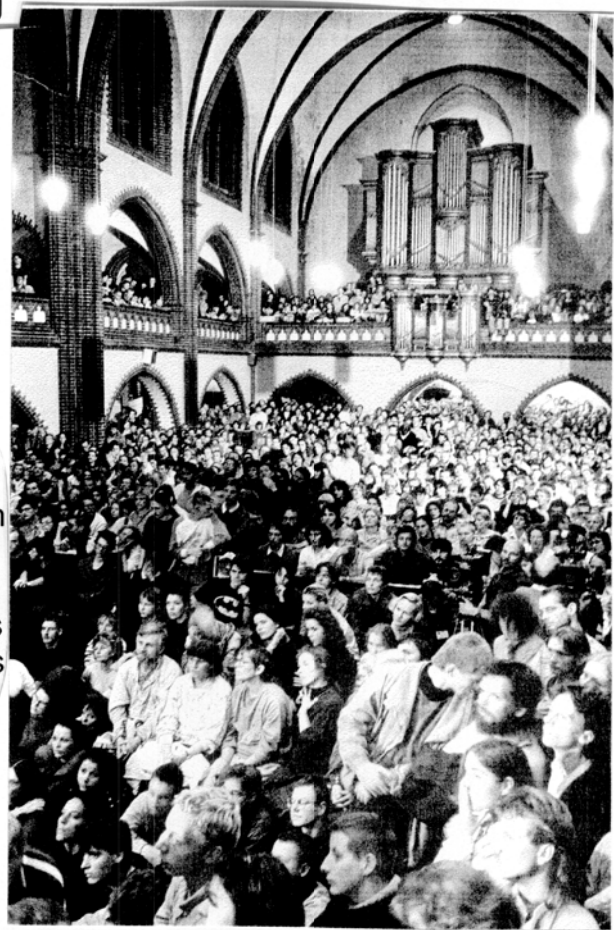
Wall would stand for another hundred years. Little did he know that God would soon intervene in a marvelous way and secure freedom for millions of oppressed people.

4A. The Dedicated Evangelicals at Prayer

With the 40th anniversary of the East German dictatorship approaching, and no hope in sight for an end to the Communist regime, despite the temporary exodus of tens of thousands of their countrymen, evangelical Lutheran young people gathered at the impressive St. Nikolaikirche in Leipzig, the church where Johann Sebastian Bach was organist in the 18th century. Every Monday night they came together for a prayer vigil, asking God for a change of government. Then with lit candles they solemnly walked around the inner ring of Leipzig. Returning to the church, they vowed to return for prayer the following Monday, if God had not yet granted their request. As the young people gathered each Monday, their numbers swelled, so that they also occupied the neighboring St. Thomaskirche, with loudspeakers communicating the announcements and prayer service to the multitude in the square between the churches.

In numerous other cities throughout the country, individual prayer vigils were held. What started as an effort by evangelical Lutheran students and pastors soon encompassed a large segment of the population. This writer's brother was a pastor in Stollberg at the time, leading the people in his city in a prayer vigil. According to his parishioners, when he spoke, virtually the entire town gathered inside and outside the Lutheran church. Some of the folks reported to this writer that the thousands of listeners were so attentive that one could hear a pin drop.

Each Monday vast numbers of citizens met for prayer. They took comfort and courage from each other but many wondered how their government would respond to their ever-swelling numbers.



5A. The Desperate Effort of the East German Government

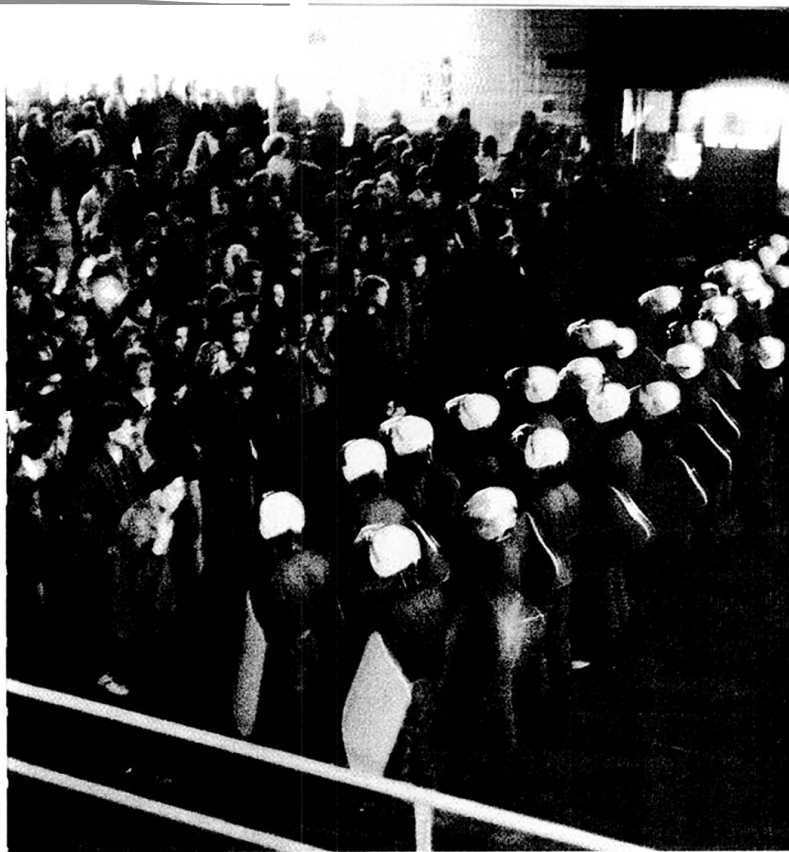
The many thousands gathered for prayer vigil each Monday knew it was only a matter of time before the government would respond with force to this peaceful challenge. This writer was in the heart of Leipzig in July of 1989. As my family and I were waiting for my brother to finish a business matter, we watched the busy pedestrian traffic, noticing that virtually every other person who passed was



a Russian soldier, German soldier or policeman. When we related our observations to our Leipzig friends over Kaffee und Kuchen, they assured us that the civilian individuals were probably plainclothes policemen. There was great tension in the air. Everyone felt that something dreadful was about to happen.

The Monday night vigils continued and an ever-increasing number of peaceful protesters from all over East Germany traveled to Leipzig Monday night. As the first Monday of October approached, reliable reports suggested that in Berlin directives had been given to the German and Russian army and police to end the vigils once and for all by shooting the protesters. Further, it was known that thousands of wooden coffins had been shipped into the city. All meat lockers had been emptied to make room for the anticipated human corpses. As the masses from throughout the country emerged from the bus and train stations that afternoon, they noticed that along every street leading to the two churches in the center of town, military personnel were stationed. Tanks and troop transport vehicles then moved in on the center of Leipzig where, by some accounts, 50,000 individuals had gathered for prayer. German and Russian police and soldiers, as well as paratroopers, formed a tight cordon around the calm crowd. Most individuals packed into the churches and town square, assumed that when they finished their prayers and began their weekly march with lit candles around the inner city ring, they would probably face their executioners. They sensed that few might leave the city alive that night. After all, they had heard what the Red Chinese had done just a few weeks earlier to the peaceful protesters at Tiananmen Square in Peking.

While thousands of individuals prayed, something occurred for which no one has found an adequate explanation. Someone in Leipzig countermanded the directive from Berlin to shoot to kill. It is unclear who it was that disobeyed the deadly directive. As the worshipers lit their candles to face those who placed a military noose around them, they noticed their executioners had vanished. The military vehicles had been removed. They were free to go on their accustomed circular walk, and then they returned to their homes. The following morning they heard the good news that their prayers of the previous evening, indeed the prayers over the months





Erich Honecker

Egon Krenz

and years, had been answered. During the night their dictator, Erich Honecker, had been replaced. Egon Kreuz, a far less brutal apparatshik, was put in his place. A sovereign God in heaven granted them their fervent request. Little did anyone know how soon and how spectacularly total freedom would come for them.

6A. The Delightful Explosion of Freedom

With the exodus of many thousands of individuals to West Germany by way of Hungary and the freedom trains in the summer of 1989, the desire for the freedom to travel outside the Communist camp became ever greater. The government, always anxious to stay in control, deliberated over how to release the accumulated pressure from a veritable pressure cooker. To counter the unrest among the populace, the government reached a decision to ease travel restrictions. On the evening of November 9, 1989, the government spokesman and member of the Politburo, Günter Schabowski, spoke in a live broadcast international news conference about the decision of the GDR government that day, to allow free travel for East German citizens. "We have decided today to implement a regulation that allows every citizen of the German Democratic Republic to leave the GDR through any of the border crossings." When Schabowski was asked how soon this would go into effect and whether a passport would be needed, he laconically read from the official paper:



Applications for travel abroad by private individuals can now be made without the previously existing requirements (of demonstrating a need to travel or proving familial relationships). The travel authorizations will be issued within a short time. Grounds for denial will only be applied in particular exceptional cases. The responsible departments of passport and registration control in the People's Police district offices in the GDR are instructed to issue visas for permanent exit without delays and without presentation of the existing requirements for permanent exit (*Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 12/13, 157).

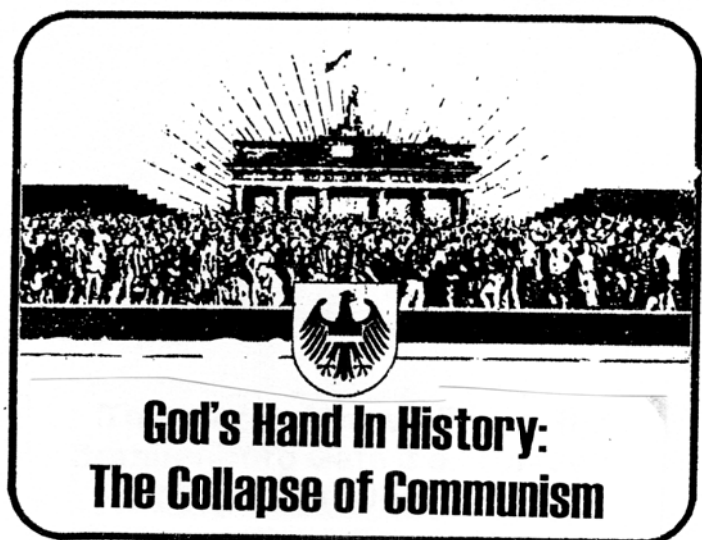
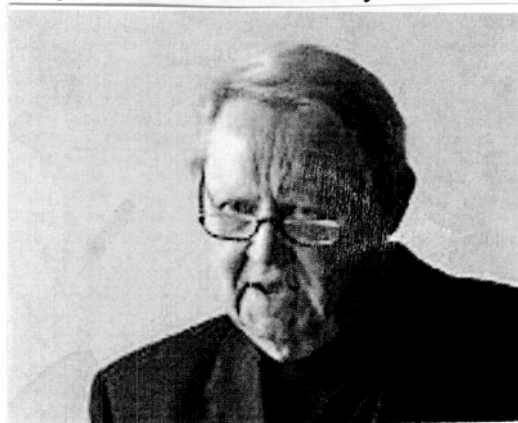
Schabowski had providentially misunderstood the Politburo decision which stipulated that the law would go into effect the following morning, but citizens still had to secure an exit permit at the local police station.

East German citizens heard him say that the law went into effect immediately and failed to realize that an official exit visa would still be required. And so it was that tens of thousands of people immediately went to the Berlin Wall, where border guards had no knowledge of the new decree. Frantically, they called their

German commander, who could not be reached. Likewise, the Russian official in charge of East Berlin was unreachable because of a malfunctioning car phone. Vastly outnumbered by the thousands approaching the three checkpoints in the wall, the border police was told by a lower ranking official to step aside. Border barriers were removed, the crowd surged through to freedom, scaling the wall and commencing a tearful victory celebration. The dramatic scenes will be etched in the memory of anyone old enough to remember. Thus on that fateful November 9, without a shot being fired, without any blood being shed, the wall crumbled.

Günter Schabowski is credited with accidentally beginning the destruction of the GDR border system. It should be noted that Schabowski remains the only high-ranking GDR official to renounce his country's Leninist-style Socialism as fatally flawed. He deeply regretted his own actions:

What upsets me the most is that I was an accountable representative of a system under which people suffered, also under which repression was aimed at individuals, who were persecuted because of their oppositional stance. Their position was the right one. My position was the wrong one. We were not capable of democracy, but rather tried in the absence of better arguments to get rid of the other opinion with direct violence (http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/G%C3%BCnter_Schabowski. Information accessed 12/16/2006)



7A. The Divine Evidence in the Demise of Communism

Little did President Ronald Reagan know of the ensuing dramatic developments when he viewed the Berlin Wall and threw out this challenge, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" He is credited by many to have started the steam roller that weakened the Soviet system and did not end until German reunification on October 3, 1990. By steadily strengthening the military might of the United States, he forced the Soviet state to spend itself into bankruptcy.

Ronald Reagan, Günter Schabowski, the Hungarian government, millions of praying Christians around the world and thousands of East German young people in their Monday night prayer vigils all were God's providential means to accomplish something that seemed impossible: the destruction of Communism and the resulting freedom for untold millions of enslaved individuals. Who would have imagined early in 1989 that by year's end the wall would be gone?

Erich Honecker intoned in January 1989 that the wall would "stand for another 50, or even 100 years!" He was totally oblivious to God's sovereign working. Many

believers in Iron Curtain countries, indeed Christians around the world, prayed for freedom for those enslaved by Communism. After 40 years God graciously and sovereignly answered their prayers.



Believers in America have prayed for decades that God would change the spiritual and moral decline of their beloved country. America began as a Christian nation. Its foundations have been undermined by theological and political liberalism, by secularism, nihilism and paganism, as well as hosts of other isms. Is it too late for America? Not at all. We are commanded to pray for our nation and its leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-2), just as Israel was asked to pray for God's help. The direct precept of Second Chronicles 7:14 is to pray. The divine promise is that God would hear. If God is well-pleased, He can answer our prayers for the United States just as suddenly and dramatically as He did in behalf of those living in Communist regimes. Let us pray for His intervention in our nation's moral and political decline, as we trust Him for His daily interposition in our own lives.



CENTRAL
SEMINARY

For the **SERVANT LEADER**

Master of Divinity

**For the CHURCH.
For the GOSPEL.**

www.centraseminary.edu



DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING

- SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE CLASSES
- ATS ACCREDITED



WWW.CENTRALSEMINARY.EDU



MASTER OF ARTS IN **BIBLICAL COUNSELING**

38 credit hour degree • 16 hours of theology • 22 hours of counseling • Required Internship
Biblical Diagnosis and Transformation • Can be completed in 2 years

centralseminary.edu

Program Directors
Nicolas Ellen and
Joshua Stephens





FOR THE

SHEPHERD

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
IN PUBLIC MINISTRY



For the

Pastor-Scholar

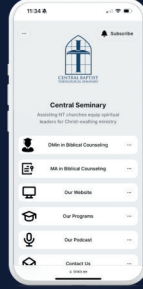
「Master of Theology」

For the CHURCH. For the GOSPEL.



CENTRAL SEMINARY

KEEP IN TOUCH



CONTACT US

Thank you for attending our MacDonald Lectures. To learn more about Central Seminary, visit our website, send us an email or give us a call.

(763) 417-8250

info@centralseminary.edu

www.centralseminary.edu

