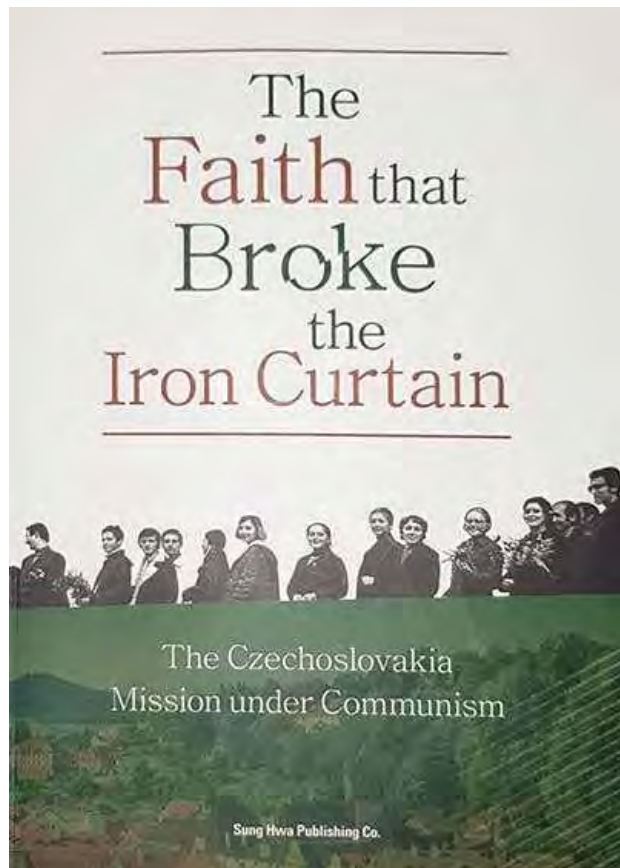


## Get the book: *The Faith that Broke the Iron Curtain*

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*"The Faith that Broke the Iron Curtain" which was prepared based on True Mother's instruction, is a collection of stories about individuals whose love for God, their nations, and their people was challenged by their own governments, costing them their freedom. This book presents first-hand testimonies of the courageous efforts and trials faced by the young unification movement in Eastern Europe half a century ago, from which we can still draw inspiration and wisdom for our lives today.*

If you wish to order this book, [please email here](#).  
Below is an excerpt from the book:

### A Reflection

When our brothers and sisters joined and took responsibility for their new understanding, they made the decision to carry on witnessing activities despite knowing the likelihood of being targeted by their own government. Even so, with the motivation to bring their fellow citizens to a deeper knowledge and experience of our Heavenly Parent's truth and love, and to know the special providence of True Parents' advent, these members

risked their freedom, their future careers, even their lives. They had made the decision to boldly reach out to their fellow citizens, believing in the uniqueness of the time and responding to the providential zeitgeist, without knowing how serious the personal consequences might be.

In the conclusion of their judgment on July 19, 1974, the judges of the Bratislava District Court made the following statements:

Based on the testimony as well as quoted materials mentioned above, it can be clearly deduced that the Principled People movement is not a religious movement, but a political one. Dr. Kvasnička has correctly analyzed and pointed out this fact in his deeply researched findings. He has concluded that all the material that had been the foundation for this movement could absolutely not be characterized as a religious doctrine, or a new religion, because they lack the basic attributes of a typical religion.

If there are any religious symbols or expressions within the material that could give the impression that this was a religion, they are only a camouflage to hide the true political intent of this teaching. The expert who researched these materials has stated that they are a kind of militant variation of the current "clerical anti-communism."...

The accused, through their continuous activities over a long period of time, have been attacking the interests of our Republic in the areas of politics, ideology and education. Based on this, at the same time they have been expressing their negative and unfriendly relations with our Republic.

The authorities used the trial and punishment of our members to make an example of them, to discourage others from undertaking similar types of activities, and to demonstrate that they would not tolerate challenges to their ideological monopoly.

The case had given cause for concern at the highest levels of the Czechoslovak government, one result being that the government strengthened the teaching of scientific atheism and Marxism in the universities. News of this was published in newspapers after the conclusion of the trial.

There was significant media interest. On November 5, 1974, some four weeks after the appeals court reaffirmed the convictions of our members in Bratislava, the Slovak language edition of Pravda, the official daily newspaper of the Communist Party of Slovakia, published a lengthy article to deter people from joining organizations opposing the communist ideal. The writers used the example of the recently tried and convicted "Principle People" to support their arguments. The article included the following

statements:

The Principle People's theory is nothing new or original. It exhibits traces of the Cold War, of the imperialist reaction against global socialism... Its content unintentionally reveals its real authors, who are living and operating in the anti-communist centers of the USA...

By hiding their real intentions and goals behind biblical terminology, the adherents of this theory are vehemently stepping out against the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems. They say: "There is no place for the eternal coexistence of good and evil. The only way out is to unleash the Third World War against the Soviet Union and global socialist society in preparation for a bloody counter-revolution."

In other words, the bloodlust of the Principle People goes so far that they presume that by destroying the freedom-loving nations by thermo-nuclear or local warfare, they will restore the reign of capitalism.

The adherents of this theory-the so-called Divine Principle- were organized as a para-military group similar to the anti-communist militia in capitalist countries... They even had to leave their jobs and their own families in order to invest more intensely to draw in other members for this militant anti-communist organization, which is fully standing in the service of the most reactive international powers, especially American imperialism.

Perhaps the Communist Party faithful of that time would have read this and been surprised and indignant to learn of such an apparently dangerous group growing, seemingly unchecked, in their midst. Today, however, this article is an illustrative example of the perversion of truth for which the communist system became known a worthy exhibit, perhaps, for a museum dedicated to those, including True Parents themselves, who suffered under it.

Communism attracted adherents from the world over with its utopian philosophy that promised to resolve many of the problems facing humankind. Yet in the end, despite idealistic intentions, communist governments became better known for persecuting those with alternative worldviews than for elevating the lives of their citizens.

In light of this we may reflect on how afraid and alone these brothers and sisters might have sometimes felt, locked in their cells, or set against each other by the prosecutors during their interrogations; or due to having their own government turn against them - young idealists seeking to inspire greater good-out of its intolerance for a competing idea.

The published court verdict and judgment was itself a strange mixture of truth and fiction. The investigation and questioning of our members undoubtedly produced a detailed record of who did what, and when. Their record must be valued for preserving, for future historians, many facts and details that otherwise might never have been remembered. Yet considering the number of our members that the government interrogated over so many months, its misrepresentation of their basic motivation and aims is puzzling. Whether this was caused by shortsightedness or willful blindness, it resulted in the harsh and sometimes brutal treatment of young people of conscience.

Even though the government agents dealing with our members were instructed not to use violence, one young woman died alone in her cell during the information-gathering process, and no apology or adequate explanation was ever given-neither to her family, nor to those who were interrogated alongside her.

If indeed Marie Živná did commit suicide, what would have prompted her to do such a thing? If it was in protest at her fellow members' arrest and interrogation, then were the communist authorities not obliged to consider the implications of their methods in relation to this young lady's sacrifice? All the more so if she was murdered.

Whatever is the case, Marie's life is a monument to the brave individual who stands up against tyranny. Who knows? Perhaps someone was deeply affected by Marie's death and thereafter worked for change.

It is clear from our members' own testimony that they focused on witnessing, on finding people who could accept the Principle as God's direct revelation of the human potential and current human condition. Even the missionaries coming from the West focused on teaching the Divine Principle and conveying news of the movement in the West. It was devoted religious work, not overt anti-communist activism.

Despite this, the authorities took some 25 young students and promising young professionals, clearly motivated and capable, and locked them out of society for several years, and then made it very hard for them to get back in. Although our members were sent to prison for the crime of subverting their own government, the subversion was, rather, on the part of the Soviet communist system, which undermined the values and spiritual aspirations of the people of Czechoslovakia.

And so there is a lesson to be drawn for our work today from our members' experience in Czechoslovakia. This is that ideologically-centered governments may misjudge the work of genuinely spiritual, idealistic, or progressive individuals or movements. Expert opinion may not be objective, and the intensity of the authorities' response to those perceived to be in opposition - even if they are citizens - may be unpredictable. Human rights may be ignored or abrogated based on a utilitarian view of protecting the status quo. If we are mindful of these points today, gleaned at the expense of the hardships faced by others half a century ago, we may protect the work of our movement and its members in missions around the world in the present time.

### **The Inheritors**

Our sister Emi was determined to enter Czechoslovakia. Paul Werner had understood directly from Father the urgent need to counter communism. As a young member in Vienna, a city that, during the Cold War, was a meeting point of Eastern and Western Europe, Emi Steberl inherited that sense of mission from them and acted upon it, investing herself body and soul. One member later wrote: "By her attitude of heart, Emi cracked open the Iron Curtain and established the first Principle community in the communist bloc."

Our brothers and sisters who joined in Czechoslovakia between 1969 to 1973 had not met True Parents - nor would they do so for almost another twenty years. Yet, through the Werners, through Emi Steberl, and through the Divine Principle teaching, our members inherited God and True Parents' heart, and their lives reflected that inheritance. Even without True Parents' instructions, they already understood what God and True Parents needed to do, and they took the initiative.

Communism is rooted in resentment; yet True Parents' teachings are rooted in redemptive love. Communist ideology places the blame for society's problems on the ruling class in society and sees conflict as the inevitable means to the liberation of the people. In contrast, our members knew from the Principle that each one of us is responsible to overcome our own sin and self-centered nature, and heal the pain of humankind through love. We know that the liberation of humankind requires us to bring others - including our enemies—to find God's forgiveness and rebirth and be part of God's kingdom.

God and True Parents' work to counter communism took many forms, from the IFVOC seminars in Japan and Korea, CARP activism in Europe and the United States, to PWPA conferences, CAUSA International seminars in crucial areas of the world, and The Washington Times newspaper. All of these contributed significantly to the global effort to counter the threat to peace and human dignity that communism posed. This story, however, is about our brothers and sisters living under a communist regime and striving to establish God and True Parents' movement from within. Although they were stopped in their tracks, they established spiritual conditions that helped bring down the Iron Curtain.

Our members' open hearts and honest declaration of faith had inevitably set them on a collision course with the communist authorities. And for all this cost them, most of them emerged from their ordeal without bitterness, with the sense that our Heavenly Parent had not forsaken them. In keeping with our True Parents' way, they fixed their minds not on the injustices they faced, but on Heaven's higher goal of the liberation of all humankind and the building of God's kingdom on earth. Because their work stemmed from True Parents' teachings, heart and practice, it was therefore True Parents' direct work in their nation.