

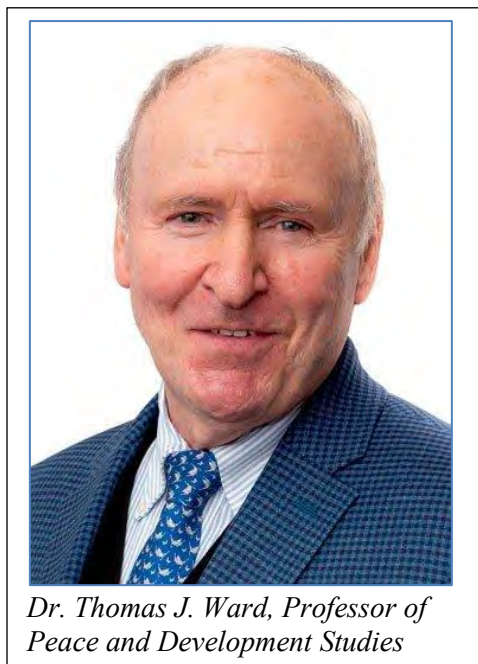
FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Thomas J. Ward - Unificationist Victims of Communism

Knut Holdhus
October 25, 2024



A monument erected in 2019 by the Czech market town of [Svojanov](#) to honour Marie Živná, who died under mysterious circumstances while in a communist prison in Bratislava. The text says, "Marie Živná - victim of the despotic communist regime"

Victims of communism: Many members and associates of the Family Federation paid the ultimate price for their faith



Dr. Thomas J. Ward, Professor of Peace and Development Studies

A speech by Dr. Thomas J. Ward, Professor of Peace and Development Studies at [HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership \(HJI\)](#), New York, USA. The speech was given on a special online program 24th October 2024 hosted by [HJI](#) and the [Higher Purpose Forum \(HPF\)](#). The theme was "Imprisoned for Their Faith - Reflections on the 1974 Sentencing of Unification Missionaries in Czechoslovakia".

I just want to say a couple things to hopefully try to contextualize all this for those of you who are not aware of the incredible work of our [True Parents](#) and of the work of the Unification movement, and the price that has been paid over the years in terms of dealing with the challenge of communism. Communism is really a faith, almost a counter-faith, that really encouraged people not to believe in [God](#), and encouraged the hate of [God](#), and the hate of those who dared to believe in [God](#).

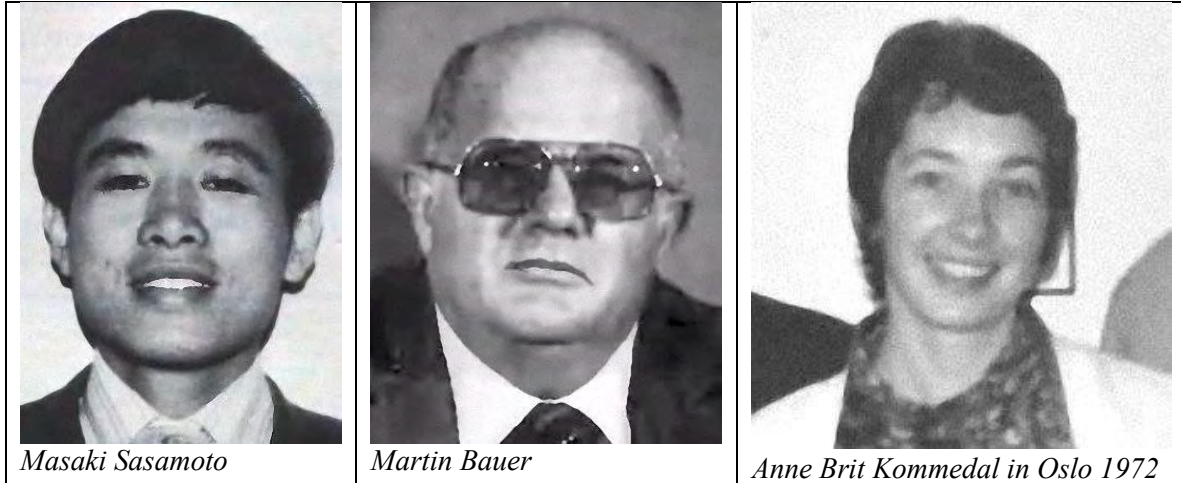
I'm reminded that shortly after the Cold War and the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989, I visited the New York Times because of an article that they had written. And the article gave the impression that we in the [Unification Church](#) were opportunists, just trying to take advantage of the downfall of communism to quickly get into those countries and affect change.

And I spoke to the foreign editor at that time at the New York Times, and the editor in chief. And what I said to them was,

"We did not go into the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe in 1998 or 1992. We were there beginning from 1968 and from the early 1970s. You don't understand us."

And so, I just want to track a little bit of the sacrifices that have been made over the years by our

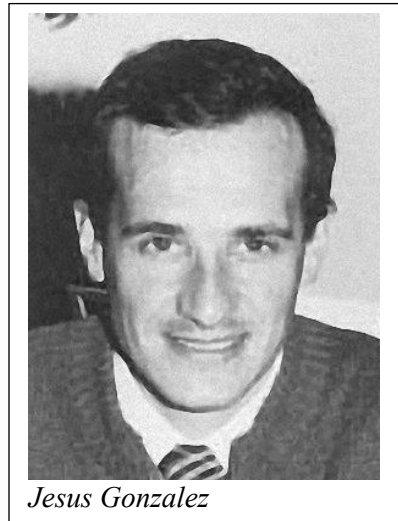
movement in the fight against communism.



Masaki Sasamoto

Martin Bauer

Anne Brit Kommedal in Oslo 1972



Jesus Gonzalez

Many of you know about the [Unification Church](#) missionary, Masaki Sasamoto (1950-1980), who was shot dead in Tanzania [Editor's note: 18th December 1980, murdered by soldiers from the government of Julius Nyerere, who influenced by Marxism ruled Tanzania as a one-party state from 1964 to 1985].

And many of you are aware of the 1976-bombing in Paris, where one Norwegian [Unification Church](#) member, Anne Brit Kommedal, was maimed horribly as a consequence of that bombing. And we know that behind that were communist terrorists.

Likewise, many of you might be aware that Martin Bauer, was shot dead and thrown into the trunk of a car back in 1985. [Editor's note: Bauer was a German emigrant, born 1925. He headed the Popular Christian Party and served as President of CAUSA International (anti-communist educational foundation founded by [Sun Myung Moon](#) in

1980) in the Dominican Republic]

And some of you might know Jesus Gonzalez [Editor's note: CAUSA's Central American Director, who lectured to more than 20,000 national and community leaders in Honduras and El Salvador from 1984 to 1990]. He worked for four years at the very center of the struggle, the war between the Nicaraguan Contras and the Sandinistas. And twice he fell into the hands of the FMLN people. And somehow, he was just blessed by [God](#) that he was able to get out without any harm being done. [Editor's note: FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) was a communist guerilla group formed in 1980 with backing of Cuba and operating mainly in El Salvador]



Lee Shapiro with Miskito Indian Children in Nicaragua in 1985

But he likewise, many times went for the Salvadorean army behind the enemy lines where the communists were located and tried to educate people there about why communism was wrong.

And really, it was an amazing course he went. And there in El Salvador, among his CAUSA members, six of them were shot dead, were assassinated, because of their involvement with CAUSA.

And many of you know Lee Shapiro who in 1987, was shot dead in Afghanistan while he tried to film, produce a film to tell the story about what was going on inside of Afghanistan. [Editor's note: Lee Shapiro, an associate of CAUSA International, undertook journeys with Nicaraguan Resistance forces (Contras), facing significant personal risks. He filmed, wrote,

produced, and directed the award-winning documentary *Nicaragua Was Our Home*, which documents firsthand testimonies of the atrocities inflicted upon the Miskito Indians by the communist Sandinistas.]

Some of you might be aware that in the late 1970s, all of our members in Ethiopia, were lined up and shot

dead because of the fact that they were affiliated with the [Unification Church](#). [Editor's note: They were regarded as anti-communists by the marxist-leninist authorities that came to power after a coup d'état 12th September 1974.]



Yu Kikumura

And many of you also are aware of Yu Kikumura, who was a member of the Japanese Red Army and was sent specifically to the United States [Editor's note: arrived 8th March 1988] to engage in terrorism. One of his terrorism targets was [Father Moon](#). We know it from Mike McDevitt, our chief of security at the time. He was informed by the FBI that the [True Parents](#) were on that list of people that Kikumura was supposed to do harm to during that period of time.

One thing I just want to recall is that the [True Parents](#) could forgive and finally they could meet Kim Il-sung in 1991. And it was because of the heart that the [True Parents](#) had, never to see someone as a permanent enemy, but to know that finally all things would be able to change.

And I'm sure that there was some of that heart that kept these precious "brothers" and "sisters" well in Czechoslovakia all those years.



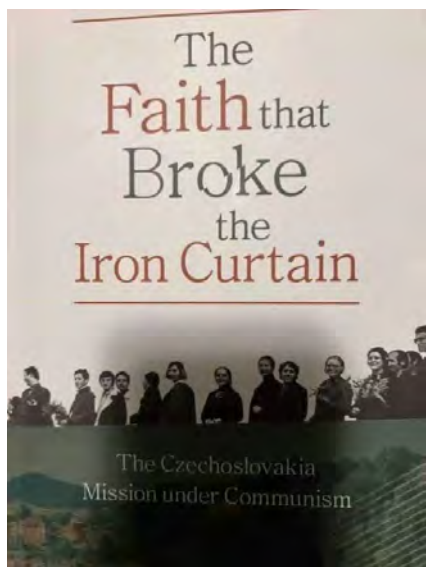
[Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) with Kim Il-sung in Hungnam, North Korea Dec. 6, 1991

However, those of us who had a chance to be around the [True Parents](#) know that they always thought about our missionaries in Eastern Europe and our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe.

And I still remember having the chance to meet with a number of them in the early 1980s when the [True Parents](#) brought them here to have a chance to engage with so many brothers and sisters in the West.

And some of you are aware of "Mission Butterfly" [Editor's note: Project with underground missionaries to many East European communist nations 1980-1992]. But I want to emphasize, and I learned that this week more deeply, that this is even before Mission Butterfly.

There's a wonderful book called The Faith That Broke the Iron Curtain. It tells this story of our Czechoslovakian "brothers" and "sisters" and the things that they went through in order to be able to go forward.



The Faith that Broke the Iron Curtain by Julian Gray (2019)

And in Prague in 1968, there were all kinds of hope that socialism was going to be different in Czechoslovakia than elsewhere. And Alexander Dubček (1921-1992), who led Czechoslovakia at that time, offered a great hope to people. However, we know that in August of 1968, everything turned around. [Editor's note: The Prague Spring was a short period from January to August 1968 of political liberalization and widespread protests in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The country was then led by reformist Alexander Dubček, the First Secretary of the Communist Party. 21st August 1968, the Soviet Union, along with most Warsaw Pact members, invaded to halt the reforms.]

Dubček called his reforms "socialism with a human face". A French writer by the name of Bernard-Henri Levy said, however,

"No, it's not socialism with a human face. Communism is barbarism with a human face. That's what it is in reality."



Emilie Steberl (1932-1981), the first underground missionary for the [Unification Church](#) to communist countries behind the Iron Curtain

And there was a profound change in attitudes towards communism during that period of time. And yet, amazingly, in October 1968 - can you imagine, just two months after the Soviets went in - one of our "sisters", Emilie Steberl, an Austrian, crossed the border and went into Czechoslovakia. She went to begin to find those people that were prepared by [God](#). And the people who are here talking to us today, not just the missionaries, but every one of them, they sat down and listened to the [Divine Principle](#). At one point along the way, they all surely felt,

"This could get me into a lot of trouble doing what I'm doing, sitting in this room, hearing these lectures, this could get me into a lot of trouble."

But they nevertheless made the determination and went forward. We have so much for which we're indebted to these precious "brothers" and "sisters".

One of whom, as we know, [Marie Živná](#) even gave her life in the midst of this. And all of them were willing to give their lives for the cause that they believed in.

If you can get a hold of this book, *The Faith That Broke the Iron Curtain*, I would encourage you to read it. It's a remarkable story, and the people that we're going to hear from today are truly remarkable people.

Thank you very much.

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First Martyr In Communist World Commemorated

• April 17, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



Marie Živná, the first martyr in a communist state, honoured on 50th anniversary of her death in a prison cell



The place Marie Živná died in a detention cell 11th April 1974 – the Palace of Justice in Bratislava, Slovakia. Photo: Laurenc Klas

Part 1 of a series

commemorating Marie Živná. See [part 2](#), [part 3](#)

No one knows exactly how Marie Živná (1949-1974) died 11th April 1974, but all agree that it was under mysterious circumstances while being held in detention by the communist authorities in Bratislava.

She had been arrested by the secret police of Czechoslovakia in the Autumn of 1973 along with 18 others as part of a crackdown on religious groups.

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Altogether 200 persons connected to the thriving [Unification Church](#) were interrogated. Many of them had joined the new religious movement that had come to the country with an underground missionary, Emilie Steberl, from neighbouring Austria in October 1968. This was 12 years before underground missionaries were sent to other East European nations as part of a legendary project behind the Iron Curtain that came to be called "Mission Butterfly".



Emilie Steberl (1932-1981), the first underground missionary for the [Unification Church](#) to communist countries behind the Iron Curtain. Photo: FFWPU

All those arrested survived the ill treatment behind the prison walls, except Marie Živná. 50 years after her untimely death, a program to honour her was held 13th April 2024 in her small hometown of Svojanov, 60 km north of the large Czech city of Brno. Another commemorative meeting was held in Bratislava, Slovakia on 7th April.

Novinky, the most visited Czech online newspaper, reported on the event in Svojanov and wrote about Marie,

Novinky.cz

"The political and social relaxation of the late 1960s was followed by normalization. In

the atmosphere of tightening screws, Marie found hope in a faith. In 1972, she became one of the first Czechoslovak members of the [Unification Church](#). The newly formed movement, standing outside official structures, immediately provoked a reaction from the regime.

A group of believers was arrested in Bratislava, and a trial ensued, in which 18 young people were sentenced to unconditional imprisonment for subverting the republic. The nineteenth, Marie Živná, did not survive to see the end of the trial. But what exactly happened behind the walls of the detention cell in the Bratislava Palace of Justice on April 11, 1974, is unknown." (Novinky 15th April 2024, translated from Czech. [Original article](#))

Barbara Grabner, a journalist in Bratislava, tells [News and Insights](#),



Marie Živná, the first martyr in the East Bloc, here in Summer of 1973, months before she got arrested. Photo: FFWPU

"In September 1973 the persecution started; Marie was arrested end of autumn 1973. Like other members she waited in the prison for the trial to take place in Bratislava. The police released Marie for a while

because they thought that she would lead them to other suspects. During that period, Margita Vrabelová, the mother of an imprisoned member of the [Unification Church](#), met Marie for the last time,

'I met her at the main station. I was walking upstairs, and she was walking downstairs. We stopped and she asked me for small change for a bus ticket. I wanted to give her more money, but she said that she didn't want to carry any extra money. So, I gave her the amount she asked for. I think that she asked for the change from me just to have a reason to stop and talk to me and tell me a little bit about her situation.'

Ladislav Šimek too met Marie,

'When I crossed the main square, Marie was walking toward me from the opposite direction. I knew it would be better not to talk to her because of the secret police observing us. We greeted each other just with our eyes in very careful manner. It was the last time that I saw Marie alive.'

Novinky writes,



Send us a message

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The official declaration where **Father Moon** declares Marie Zivna martyr on 1st May 1994. Photo: **FFWPU**

"However, Jiří P. Kříž [a friend of Marie from her student days in Brno] does not believe that she committed suicide, as the official version claimed.

"It was not technically possible. And it contradicts her state of mind. She managed to contact another inmate, so we know she was joyful. What those StB [State Security, the secret police] agents did to her then exceeded the imagination of any of us,' Kříž added, according to his findings, there are no written documents in the archives about what happened."



From the grave of the Zivna family in Svojanov, Czech Republic. Photo: **FFWPU**

Friends of Marie tried to find out how she had died. They found that Marie's parents had been shocked upon seeing their daughter's body in the coffin. Her hair had turned grey while in prison. How could the hair of a 24-year old suddenly lose its colour? The parents must have suspected that Marie had been seriously mistreated, maybe even tortured while imprisoned.

In his autobiography *As a Peace-loving Global Citizen*, **Sun Myung Moon**, the founder of the **Unification Church**,

mentions how Marie Živná

"lost her life while in prison at the young age of twenty-four. She was the first martyr who died while conducting missionary work in a communist country." (p164)

Father Moon describes his reaction when he heard the news of her death,

"I could not speak. I fell into a sorrow that seemed to have no end, as if I had been thrown into deep water." (p164)

One of the first members of the **Unification Church** in Czechoslovakia was Milos Klas. He joined in 1970 and was also arrested, interrogated and imprisoned. He recalls,

"I used to witness [evangelize] mainly to those students and young people who attended some church. I didn't witness to my colleagues even though some of them knew about my 'forbidden' activities. My own particular lifestyle and the way in which I treated people left a positive impact on them. So, in difficult circumstances my colleagues would always help me, even if it meant a risk for them.

One day in October of 1973, the secret police visited my workplace. They wanted to arrest me but because I wasn't present, they told my boss that he should order me to be there on the following day at a certain time when they would come again. My boss managed to warn me that the secret police were going to come for me and suggested that I should take all precautions necessary.

It gave me just enough time to hide our literature in a heap of coal in my landlady's cellar and to deeply bury the rest in the forest, with the help of a young member. My boss was excellent. He even cared for me some years later when I was released from prison. He re-employed me even though the management protested strongly. [...]Altogether I spent twelve months in prison. The authorities released me four

As a Peace-Loving
Global Citizen



Front cover of *Father Moon's* autobiography.



Milos Klas in the early

authorities released the four... mius Hus in the early months early because, without my... seventies. Photo: FFWPU knowledge, my mother had written a petition for clemency to President Husak, who had granted it." (Mission Butterfly – Pioneers Behind the Iron Curtain, 2006, p30-31)

Part 1 of a series commemorating Marie Živná. See [part 2](#), [part 3](#)

Featured image above: A photo of Marie Živná (1949-1974), the first martyr in the communist world, displayed by Mária Uhnáková, who was also imprisoned, at the commemorative meeting in Svojanov on 13th April 2024. Photo: FFWPU

"First Martyr in Communist World Commemorated" – text by Knut Holdhus, collected from reports from Czech Republic and Slovakia. Posted 17th April 2024 at 5:06 pm. Updated 18th April at 9:34 am.

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