

LIBERATING A CONTINENT: JOHN PAUL II AND THE FALL OF COMMUNISM



SYNOPSIS

One of history's greatest examples of the triumph of spiritual power over violence and oppression is vividly recounted in *Liberating a Continent: John Paul II and the Fall of Communism*, a new documentary film that poignantly captures the intricate role played by John Paul in the collapse of communism and the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe.

Featuring the unique insights of intellectual and cultural leaders such as papal biographer George Weigel, esteemed Polish historian Norman Davies, Pontifical John Paul II Institute Vice President Carl Anderson, John Paul's lifelong assistant Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, Reagan National Security Advisor Richard Allen, and many others, this inspiring film gives an inside look at the improbable downfall of one of history's most brutal regimes.

Narrated by Jim Caviezel (*Passion of the Christ*, *Person of Interest*) and with original music by Joe Kraemer (*Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation*, *Jack Reacher*) this is the incredible story of one man's unwavering faith born of deep personal suffering, his steadfast defense of the dignity of the human person amidst the horrors of Nazi and Soviet Occupation, and his unyielding belief in the spiritual unity of Europe. *Liberating a Continent* convincingly reveals how these convictions toppled an evil empire — and how they remain today the moral foundations for a prosperous and free Europe.

BIOGRAPHIES



Carl Anderson, Executive Producer

Carl A. Anderson is the chief executive officer and chairman of the board of the Knights of Columbus, the world's largest organization of Catholic laymen with more than 1.9 million members.

He was a close collaborator of St. John Paul II since the early 1980s. He has served on numerous Vatican commissions including as consultant to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (2006).

Supreme Knight Anderson was also executive producer on the film *For Greater Glory* starring Peter O'Toole, Andy Garcia and Eva Longoria.



David Naglieri, Director and Writer

David Naglieri is an Emmy-nominated documentary film writer and producer whose body of work includes *Guadalupe: The Miracle and the Message*, narrated by Jim Caviezel; *Unbreakable: A Story of Hope and Healing in Haiti*, narrated by Bruce Greenwood; *John Paul II in America: Uniting a Continent*, narrated by Andy Garcia; *Francis: The Pope from the New World*; *For Greater Glory: The True Story of the Cristeros*; *Road of Hope: The Spiritual Journey of Cardinal Van Thuan*; *A Hand of Peace: Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust* and *Opus Dei: Decoding God's Work*. A 2002 recipient of a PEW fellowship to study the influence of religion on contemporary global affairs, David hold a Master's Degree in International Relations from Boston University and a Bachelor's Degree in History from Marist College. He formerly worked for Salt & Light Television in Toronto.

J P I I



HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

1964, 1967: Karol Wojtyła named Archbishop of Krakow in 1964; ascends to the College of Cardinals three years later.

1967-1969: Archbishop Wojtyła spearheads a campaign to build a church in Nowa Huta (The New Steel Mill), the so-called ‘workers’ paradise’ built by the communists in the easternmost reaches of Krakow in the 1950s. In 1969, Wojtyła consecrates The Ark of the Lord Church, which is seen as a great triumph in the struggle for religious freedom behind the iron curtain.

1978: Cardinal Karol Wojtyła is elected Pope, the first non-Italian Pontiff in 455 years.

1979: Pope John Paul II returns to his native Poland for the first time since his election and millions turn out — despite Communist Party efforts to prevent mass demonstrations of faith by Polish Catholics.

1980: Solidarity, the first independent trade union to exist under communist rule, is born following nationwide strikes in Poland. With the support of Pope John Paul II, Solidarity membership soon grows to more than 10 million members, transforming Poland into a beacon of hope for repressed nations living under Soviet domination.

1989: ‘Round Table’ talks in Poland lead to the legalization of Solidarity and free elections. The Berlin Wall falls and communist regimes begin to collapse throughout Central and Eastern Europe.



SNAPSHOT OF FEATURED EXPERTS

- Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, Archbishop of Krakow
- Carl Anderson, CEO of the Knights of Columbus & former White House official under President Reagan
- George Weigel, biographer of John Paul II
- Dr. Norman Davies, Polish historian
- Fr. Maciej Zięba, O.P., theologian and philosopher
- Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki, Archbishop of Lviv
- Most Rev. Gintaras Grusas, Archbishop of Vilnius, Lithuania
- Hana Suchoka, former Prime Minister of Poland
- Dr. Stanisław Grygiel, philosopher at the John Paul II Institute
- Joaquín Navarro-Valls, former director of the Holy See Press Office
- Richard Allen, Ronald Reagan’s National Security Advisor
- Valdas Adamkus, former President of Lithuania



STORY STARTERS



1. *The spiritual and the secular.* Communism maintained its power in Eastern Europe through fear, repression and brutality. However, it could not be eradicated by force. As the pre-eminent Polish historian Dr. Norman Davies states in the film, “It could only be defeated by spiritual power.” The story of the fall of communism in Poland and the liberation of a continent dramatically bears witness to this truth. When John Paul II began his epic 9-day pilgrimage in June of 1979 by celebrating mass in Warsaw’s Victory Square, he called on God to “send down your Spirit and renew the face of the earth,” adding after a dramatic pause, “And the face of this land.” It was a powerful indicator that ultimately God was sovereign and not the communist regime. His numerous speeches and homilies during that pilgrimage helped Poles realize the truth about their Catholic identity, restoring a sense of dignity and courage. This transformation leavens the ground for the rise of Solidarity, the first independent trade union to exist under Communist rule, and the lynchpin in a popular revolution that collapsed the Iron Curtain.



2. *The first domino: Poland.* Karol Wojtyła hailed from Poland, the most intensely Catholic of the Warsaw Pact countries, which in 1978 became home to the first non-Italian Pope in 455 years. The Catholic Church in Poland, which had suffered immensely during the Second World War and subsequent Soviet repression, had undergone a spiritual renewal through the work of the Nine Year 'Great Novena' under the leadership of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński — culminating in the celebration of the Millennium of Polish Christianity in 1966. Even before his election to the papacy and triumphant return to Poland, John Paul II had been deeply involved in planting the seeds of future resistance. As a popular priest engaged in ministry to university students, Fr. Wojtyła organized many kayaking and hiking trips, helping cultivate 'zones of freedom' in which young people could express their faith and share ideas in a nation where free thought was squelched. Later, as the Archbishop of Krakow, Wojtyła helped inspire a broad based coalition of intellectuals and workers who were united by the conviction that the human person was made for freedom. The country’s rich faith was fertile ground allowing the seeds of the 1979 pilgrimage to give rise to the Solidarity movement.



3. *John Paul II’s continued relevance in Central and Eastern Europe.* The 2014 Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine did not occur in a vacuum. Ukrainians rose up to defend their hope to be respected as a free nation with a European orientation. What began as a movement of resistance to a corrupt government evolved into a broad-based movement to rebuild civil society in Ukraine as the essential foundation for the nation. These values were a key part of John Paul’s post-communist message to the liberated nations of Central and Eastern Europe. Major-Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk described the uprising as “an extended, inspired pilgrimage from fear and fraud to dignity and integrity.” Shevchuk went on: “St. John Paul II will protect us and protect the world from new iron curtains and new Berlin Walls.”