

Lesson Seventeen

Revolutionaries

LESSON IDEA

To show the difference between the revolutionaries who fought for and won American independence, and those in our time who have worked to destroy freedom while pretending to be like our Founding Fathers. The contrast between George Washington and Cuba's communist dictator Fidel Castro will serve as our main example.

PREPARATION

Review the discussion parts of the lesson and adapt them to fit your family's level of understanding. For younger children, clip pictures of presentday revolutionaries from newspapers and magazines and compare them with those of Washington and signers of the Declaration.

SINCE THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, those who led it have been honored as heroes worldwide. Why do you think so many persons, in so many countries other than our own, share our admiration for George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Hancock, and the other Founders? [Encourage each child to answer.]

Fidel Castro, for example, was widely portrayed on American television and elsewhere as the "George Washington of Cuba" during the Cuban revolution in the late 1950s. Was that comparison valid? Why? [Encourage everyone to answer.]

Let us first take a brief look at George Washington as the perhaps the prime example of an American revolutionary leader in 1776. He had lived a comfortable life on his Virginia plantation. His customs, manners, dress, and speech were those of an English gentleman. He had no animosity toward the English and valued the principles of honesty, honor, and fairness that were aspects of the civilization of his day.

In sharp contrast, the Marxist rebel Fidel Castro demonstrated total contempt for such principles as honor, integrity, truthfulness, and justice, and a willingness to use any means to achieve his ends by overthrowing the established order.

But why, if Washington was not opposed to English values, did he lead an army against Britain in a war for independence? Why did he

believe that it was important to break political ties with a nation sought to have its citizens be ethical, truthful, and just? Exactly what aspects of British policy did he and his fellow revolutionaries oppose to the point of being willing to wage war to bring about change? [Encourage discussion, including the point that the American leaders were at odds with Britain's king-centered government, not the basic values of English society. Though justice was the professed goal of English civil law, it was not practiced by the King or Parliament.]

WHY DID WASHINGTON oppose England's king-centered government, but not its code of values? The determining factor was a deep religious conviction. He was recognizing that rights are God-given, he rejected the notion that they were King-given. He valued the honor, honesty, and justice of English society because such positive attributes were based on Scripture and were uplifting for all societies and nations.

Castro, as a Communist, denied the existence of God and waged war against not only the Cuban

FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

If the discussions in this lesson are beyond the understanding of younger children, you may wish to skip them and focus instead on the story of the mythical kingdom of Thud. Questions that could be raised after reading the story could include:

If you had lived in the country of Thud, would you have joined the rebels of the nation of Opportunity who were fighting for freedom? Why?

Were the Tyrants who overthrew the king honest? Did they fight fairly? Who helped them? Could they have taken over the country without the help of some of the King's own ministers?

What lies do you suppose the Tyrants told the people to entice them to fight each other?

If you had lived in the kingdom, would you have been more frightened if the Tyrants had killed only their enemies, rather than every fourth persons they met at random? Why did they do the latter?

government, but all sound religious values as well. Lying, stealing, and assassination were to him mere tools to further the goals of his revolution. Castro believed and taught his followers – that “the end justifies the means.” What does that phrase mean? [Help family members to understand that the “end justifies the means” concept demolishes standards of right and wrong. Acts are judged in terms of whether they work, not whether they are right or wrong.] For Castro, all sorts of evil acts were held to be proper if they benefited enhanced his revolution. Do you think Washington and the other American revolutionaries also believed that “the end justifies the means?”

Castro was a master of deceit. When seeking money and weapons from the United States, he assured the U.S. officials (and the American people) that he was not, and never had been, a Communist. Once in power, he told the Cuban people and the world that he was, and always had been, a Communist.

Did Washington or other American leaders try to conceal their motives from European nations during their Revolution? What steps did they take to make their intentions clearly known? [Point out that their motives were openly and bluntly stated in the Declaration of Independence.] What would have happened if Castro had been as honest in stating his motives? Would he have received American support? Why not? What did he have to hide? [Make clear that the methods and brutality of the communists were well known due to their takeover of other countries. Castro would not have succeeded if he had honestly stated his case.]

Following Castro’s successful revolution, the firing squads were formed, and thousands of Cubans were murdered as “enemies of the revolution,” not because they had opposed it, but because they were property owners or might do so in the future. Graves of wealthy Cubans were opened so items of value could be confiscated to finance the Castro regime. Churches were closed; ministers, priests, and missionaries tortured and were murdered; Bibles were confiscated and destroyed; families were separated; food was rationed. Why were these terrible steps taken? [After some answers have been given, ask if these acts of terror would encourage or discourage opposition to the new government. Would Castro’s power be increased or

decreased? Help family members to understand that when life and liberty are attacked by government, and average citizens are terrorized, the government has become a dictatorship, regardless of what it may otherwise choose to call itself.]

WHAT HAPPENED in America after the War for Independence was won? There were “enemies of the revolution,” to be sure. Almost one-third of the colonists had remained loyal to England, and some had given information to the British that cost American patriots their lives. Were they lined up before firing squads? Some patriots thought it would be justified, but Washington and other leaders rejected such revenge. There were no executions, and property was not confiscated. To be sure, some of the pro-British colonists (called Tories) were badly treated by neighbors or former friends. Some lost property through the ravages of war and wanton acts of a few hotheaded militia, but none faced a firing squad or hangman’s noose sanctioned by the new government. In fact, the Continental Congress even refused to cancel debts owed to British merchants, and such revolutionary leaders as Thomas Nelson, Jr., Thomas Jefferson, and Lewis Morris men who had emptied their own pockets to pay the expenses of American troops and ambassadors sold more of their property and other possessions to pay the personal debts they owed to the British.

The new government formed after the war by the victorious American revolutionaries entailed less power than any other in history. Gone was the throne that had been reserved for kings and dictators. Its place was taken by a legislature, court system, and executive branch three separate centers of power, each designed to check and balance the power and influence of the others.

The God-given rights of the people to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were protected by a written contract called the Constitution. Powerseekers were hamstrung by the restrictions written into that historic document.

It could easily have been otherwise. Washington, had he been inclined to do so, could have taken advantage of his power as the commander of a victorious army to establish a strong, central government. Indeed, so great was his popularity that many of his fellow citizens urged him

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

Because France supplied money and men for the American Revolution, and eight years later dethroned her own king, many Americans believe that the American and French Revolutions were similar. Yet the methods and objectives of the latter (like Castro's communist revolution in Cuba) were virtually the opposite of those that characterized the American colonial revolt. Read more about the leaders, tactics, and goals of the French Revolution (and further the contrast with those of the American Revolution). Check our recommended reading list for reliable histories.

to become king. But he was not seeking personal glory or power. Government was, in his words, "a dangerous servant and a fearful master" an instrument to be regarded with distrust and held in check. Had he been a prototype of Fidel Castro, he could have become a virtual dictator.

Can you think of any contemporary revolutionaries who might provide a contrast in their beliefs about God, morality, property, the proper role of government, etc., similar to that of George Washington and Fidel Castro? [Former Chilean Presidents Augusto Pinochet (a staunch anti-communist and advocate of free-market economics) and Salvador Allende (a communist) provide such a contrast. Discuss the excerpts from sundry editions of the *World Book Yearbook* that appear at the conclusion of this lesson, emphasizing how the Chile's experience underscored the crucial point (made by Robert Welch in *The Blue Book Of The John Birch Society*) that "neither the form of government nor its quality is as important as its quantity [size]."]

THE FOLLOWING STORY about the mythical kingdom of Thud may add to our understanding of the difference between the two basic types of revolution.

King Nasty was the ruler of Thud. His subjects, who viewed him as a tyrant, pleaded with his ministers for fair and just treatment. But King Nasty dismissed their objections. "Let them complain," he declared. "I am king, and they are my servants. What I wish shall be law."

But trouble was brewing for the king in a far

corner of Thud. After many journeys to the palace, over many years, to beg King Nasty to let them choose their own ministers, these distant subjects began to question the King's authority.

"Is he not made of flesh, just as we are?" they asked. "Were we not created at birth with the same rights as he? What makes him think that we are merely his servants?"

King Nasty, learning of the growing resentment, sent his army to put an end to the rebellion. But the subjects banded together to defend their homes and families. "We want to be free to pursue the life, liberty, and happiness that are rights granted by our Creator," insisted. "And we are willing to fight your army, and die if necessary, for our freedom."

And fight they did, for eight long years, until victory was achieved. The rebel leaders then formed a new nation that they named Opportunity. Ordinary citizens were chosen to make the laws, and Opportunity began to grow and prosper. Many residents of Thud left their homes and resettled in the new nation live in freedom.

Meanwhile, in the palace of King Nasty, another group of rebels began plotting to take over the kingdom. Virtually nothing about Thud pleased them, so virtually everything had to be changed, they claimed. Only then, they argued, would peace reign and everyone be happy.

Financed and protected by some of the King's own rebellious ministers, the rebels moved from city to city spreading rumors and falsehoods that soon had the country divided into contentious factions. No one noticed that King Nasty had been thrown into a dungeon. The rebels, now known as Tyrants, took his palace.

On their first day in power, the Tyrants rode through the countryside collecting guns. They said they said it would promote peace by keeping "the people" from fighting with each other.

Once the guns were safely stored in the palace, the Tyrants demanded the people give up their land, homes, shops, and factories. When some refused, the new regime began killing every fourth person in the kingdom at random. The frightened and terrorized people quickly "got the message" and surrendered their property and other possessions. Soon, everything belonged to the Tyrants, and the people of Thud were forced to

visit the palace to beg for a place to live, food to eat, and clothing to wear.

"You are now our slaves," the Tyrants told the hungry people, "and we will give you food only if you work for us and make things that we can sell to make us rich."

Everyone was sent to work in the fields and factories. Each captive received a gray suit, and a single potato each morning for food. Many tried to leave the country, but the Tyrants built a high wall around it and shot those who attempted to climb it.

Given the choice, where here would you choose to live--in the nation of Opportunity or in the country of Thud? Why? [Ask family members why each made their choice. Depending on the age of the children, explain in more detail how the rebellion that produced the nation of Opportunity was similar to the revolution that led to the founding of United States. Also, compare the subversive techniques of the Tyrants in Thud to Castro in Cuba and Allende in Chile.]

Concluding Thought

Washington and the leaders of the American Revolution were rebelling against the form of government that gave a king or queen virtually unlimited power to rule as they saw fit, with little restraint. Unlike Fidel Castro, who believed "the end justifies the means," the Americans were men of honor and integrity who created a new government with limited powers that would resist the rise to power of a dictator.

Next week will take a look at the life of one of the generals who led the American Revolution.

Allende v. Pinochet

CHILE. Salvador Allende Gossens, an avowed Marxist-Leninist, won the closest and most controversial presidential election in Chile's history on Sept. 4, 1970. Backed by a coalition of Socialist and Communist parties, he received a plurality of 36.3 per cent of the votes cast in a five-sided race. His victory was confirmed by Congress, and on November 4 Allende took office for a six-year term. On November 12, Chile re-established diplomatic relations with Cuba.

During his campaign, Allende promised to nationalize the copper, petroleum, iron ore, and

nitrate industries as well as banks, insurance companies, wholesale distributors, and large manufacturing plants--foreign-owned as well as domestic. He also pledged to carry out radical agrarian reforms.

Allende's victory aroused alarm over his plans to transform Chile into a Socialist state. A brief run on the banks in October reflected the uneasiness. Conservative Chileans were disturbed in November when an Allende-sponsored ceremony was held in Santiago to mark the unveiling of a statue of Ernesto (Che) Guevara, the late Cuban revolutionary leader." (The World Book Year Book 1971, 1971), p. 253.)

President Salvador Allende Gossens, an avowed Marxist, continued his efforts to transform Chile into a Socialist state in 1971. Through such measures as price freezes, wage increases of up to 50 per cent, and the use of foreign exchange reserves to maintain a heavy flow of imports, Allende's Popular Unity coalition government gained considerable popularity early in the year. In proof of this, its candidates won about 49 per cent of the votes cast in the April 4 municipal elections. But the price, in economic terms, was high: Shortages developed in such categories as consumer goods, food, and spare parts." (The World Book Year Book 1972, p. 280.)

CHILE. President Salvador Allende Gossens, the first elected Marxist in Latin American history, fought for his political life in 1972. At the risk of provoking a civil war or a military coup, he plunged ahead with a drastic Socialist revolution, even though he had no clear mandate.

...On August 21, housewives in Santiago staged a pot-banging demonstration in protest against food shortages. On the same day, most of Chile's 150,000 shopkeepers closed in a one-day protest against Allende's Socialist policies as well as to protest living costs which had soared 99.8 per cent between January and September as compared with a 22.1 per cent rise in all of 1971....The economy limped along through deficit financing and with aid from Communist nations. (The World Book Year Book 1973, p. 263.)

CHILE. President Salvador Allende Gossens, the first freely elected Marxist chief of state in the Western Hemisphere, was deposed in a violent military coup d'etat on September 11, 1973. He reportedly committed suicide rather than surren-

der. The military proclaimed their action a mission that liberated Chile "from the Marxist yoke." A four-man military junta, headed by General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, took control and declared a state of siege.

...paradoxically, in a movement that Karl Marx would hardly have credited, the middle classes (which make up over half of Chile's 9 million people) proved a vigorous mass force--supporting their demands with mass action. They opposed Allende's Socialist measures, particularly farm expropriation and factory nationalization. They suffered from abuse and threats of violence, from inflation (over 300 per cent in a year), and from shortages of all kinds. It was this surfeit of troubles that brought about the coup.

In the weeks that followed, Chile slowly began returning to normal, with truckers, small businessman, public-transport workers, and members of various professional groups returning to their jobs....And the junta placed a ban on all Marxist political parties, which had commanded 43.39 per cent of the vote in the March 4 congressional elections." (The World Book Year Book 1974, p. 253.)

CHILE....Under the guidance of a civilian economic team that stressed free enterprise, the economy continued to recover, and the gross national product registered a gain of 8 per cent, one of the highest in Latin America. (The World Book Year Book 1980, p. 246.)

CHILE. In a national plebiscite held on Sept. 11, 1980, Chileans approved by a 2-to-1 margin a new constitution and the continuance of military rule until the constitution becomes effective in 1989....

As the plebiscite approached, the country's economy was thriving. Foreign reserves stood at an all-time record \$2.2 billion. Because of favorable prices for copper exports, Chile's foreign trade during the first half of 1980 was 50 percent higher than during the comparable period in 1979. (The World Book Year Book 1981, p. 244.)

CHILE.

The Cost of Living Index rose at an annual rate of only 5.5 per cent in the first half of 1981, but interest rates were high and the money supply was tight. Goods were more plentiful in

Chilean stores and markets, and there was an apparent growth of the nation(s middle class... (The World Book Year Book 1982, p. 240.)