

Bible-smuggling behind the Iron Curtain

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This lecture explores the clandestine and little-explored world of Bible-smuggling from Western to Eastern Europe during the Cold War in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. These were the decades when mainly Evangelical Protestant Christians from the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, the USA and elsewhere sought to combat the official atheism of the Communist-controlled states of the 'Eastern bloc' by bringing across contraband religious literature, above all the Bible, which they believed to be in short supply, or even banned, under Communist regimes. Bible-smuggling, although little-known outside Evangelical circles, captured the imagination of many millions of people, led to the steady recruitment and formation of hundreds or thousands of Christian smugglers, and resulted in the creation of ever-more elaborate and influential organizations, many of which continue to operate today. Bible-smuggling, itself a niche activity, can nevertheless offer telling glimpses into the thinking and practices of Evangelical Christians, Communist secret police, Western intelligence agencies, NGOS, and governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. Detailed examination of the phenomenon can add substantially to our understanding of spirituality, intelligence, espionage, religious organization, material culture, and Cold War thinking. It further contributes to our understanding of the so-called 'culture clash' between 'Liberals' and 'Conservatives' which remains a marked feature of current political and social discourse in the Western world.

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Locatie: lokaal Annexe, Rodestraat 14 (via ingang Lange Winkelstraat)