

Laughter Killed the Devil

There's a story about the theologian Smith Wigglesworth awakened in the middle of the night to see a dark hideous creature in the corner of his room.

"Who are you?", he asked.

"The Devil", it replied.

"Oh, just you?", he said as he rolled over and went back to sleep.

The Soviet Union had a major problem. Lawbreakers were everywhere. They were spreading pamphlets, posters, and graffiti of the most threatening variety to the ruling class. Satire. The most difficult part for the bureaucrats and armed thugs trying to stop it was they didn't always recognize it. Artists forced to create art for the party would lace it with inside jokes and mockery the average person would spot, but the self-serious government would not.

The government of New York wants you to know they will not tolerate freedom. Every citizen is a prisoner, condemned to their home and allowed brief outdoor excursions as long as they are alone. They want to enlist you to enforce this slavery. So they setup a special number. "Text this number if you see anyone violating our oppression." And people did text it. A lot. They texted dick pics in such a volume the government was forced to shut down the hotline.

Evil is self-serious. Oppressors and statists can only live by fear. Fear is the only thing they have. If they are not feared, they are nothing. They are a threat only to the extent people fear them as such. There is nothing - nothing - done by the state and the dictators who run it that can be done if people do not fear them.

Courage appears to be the antidote to fear. In a way it is, but courage is such an equal and opposite force that when it meets tyranny the resulting spectacle can spread more fear. A courageous martyr sometimes inspires mass revolt, but often makes an example that sends people deeper into hiding.

Pure ideals and clear arguments can offer some resistance to tyranny. But the stronger those ideas, the more danger that they morph into tyranny themselves. Violent ideological revolutions devolve into a new form of tyranny.

But laughter cannot be defeated. It does not confront head on. It does not play the game evil wants to play, on familiar turf. It plays its own game, speaks its own language, a game and language the devil doesn't understand. It's confounding and unstoppable. It

undermines the foundation of fear evil relies on.

The degenerate, unserious, self-interested rabble who don't respect anything enough to not mock it are a greater protection from tyranny than well-meaning high-minded intellectuals.