

**Strybel - Poznań '56 from 1**

pace indefinitely, were it not for a financial miscalculation. The events of Poznań '56 started with a simple book-keeping error. In December, 1955, the workers of the rolling-stock factory ZISPO (Zakłady imienia Stalina-Poznań - Stalin Works of Poznań) discovered that through some bureaucratic slip-up they had not benefited from a tax break introduced the previous year. When the factory Communist Party cell and the regime-controlled unions showed no interest in the matter, the workers elected delegates to talk with management, local government authorities and finally with the Ministry of Industry in Warsaw.

The matter dragged on for six months. Then somehow the rumor got started that the workers' delegates sent to Warsaw had been arrested. The rumor was untrue, but began living a life of its own and would soon spark off an unstoppable series of events.

On the morning of June 28, ZISPO workers took to the streets and marched to downtown Poznań. Carrying make-shift banners that read "CHLEBA I WOLNOŚCI" ([we want] bread and freedom), they were joined by workers from other local factories. A local Communist Party secretary, who tried to reason with the demonstrators, was shouted down. They demanded to see Prime Minister Joseph Cyrankiewicz. After several hours had passed with no sign of Cyrankiewicz nor any other senior government official, the crowds began getting restless.

Suppressed for 15 years-by nearly six years of Nazi occupation followed by nine more of hard-line Stalinism - the workers had finally gotten their first taste of freedom. As helpless individuals they had been kept in line by the monolithic, all-powerful regime. Now, in a large group of like-minded protesters, they finally felt their own strength. That heightened their determination as well as their impatience.

The restlessness turned to violence when someone suggested they march on a government radio facility which jammed Radio Free Europe and other broadcasts from the Free World. The crowd numbering many thousands surged through the streets of Poznań, demolishing the jamming station and releasing prisoners from a local jail. With the guns they seized at the police stations they smashed up, the protesters opened fire on the local headquarters of the hated communist secret police (UB). As is always the case during popular risings, no matter how noble their cause, criminal elements took advantage of the confusion to demolish and loot shops.

Several hours later troops arrived at the scene and opened fire on the demonstrators. A woman was struck by a bullet, but before she dropped the Polish flag she was carrying, a 13-year-old boy, Romek Strzałkowski, ran up and saved it from desecration. He too was eventually killed, but word of the incident spread like wildfire. Poznań '56 already had its own martyr-hero. (Following the collapse of communism in 1989, one of Poznań's main streets was named "ulica Romka Strzałkowskiego").

Scattered shooting continued for two more days, but the demonstrators - despite the few guns in their possession - were no match for thousands of well-trained and armed security troops. When it was all over, the official figures were 53 people killed and some 300 wounded. A total of 323 people were arrested for rioting or on suspicion of organizing the revolt.

Things did not end there, however. The physical clashes of Poznań '56 would become a catalyst for a series of events which were to turn Poland into the most liberal Soviet satellite. A power struggle between Stalinist hard-liners and more liberal minded reformers erupted within Poland's ruling communist party. Eventually, the hard-liners were dismissed and a new administration under Władysław Gomułka took their place. (In 1949, Gomułka, a national communist, had been fired, jailed and threatened with a trial for being too pro-Polish and insufficiently pro-Russian.)

Now, more boldly than ever before, the communist controlled press began

criticizing the abuses of hard-line Stalinism. Poland's Roman Catholic Primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, who had been kept in detention for three years, was released. Workers councils not controlled by the regime began springing up in factories, and independent discussion groups appeared on university campuses.

The Party's Eighth Plenum (full central committee meeting), due to begin on October 19, was widely expected to make Gomułka's "Polish road to socialism" official government policy. The very same day, a top-level Soviet delegation unexpectedly arrived in Warsaw, including Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Molotov and Kaganovich. At the same time, Soviet troops stationed in Poland began moving towards Warsaw. It was a moment of high political drama which could have easily ended in tragedy.

The Russians were upset that the Poles were introducing changes without consulting Moscow. They were also unhappy about the new leaders, including Gomułka. After hours of bitter recriminations, the Polish communists managed to convince the Soviets that they could keep the situation under control. Khrushchev ordered the Soviet troops back to their bases, and the delegation resumed to Moscow.

At the Eighth Plenum, delegates openly spoke about such once taboo subjects as secret-police terror, torture, rigged trials, fabricated evidence and other Stalinist crimes. The Central Committee, the Communist Party's legislature, elected by secret ballot a new Politburo, an executive organ much like a government cabinet. Their members were mostly reformists like Gomułka. (Under communism, that is where actual power was exercised, the government and parliament being mere puppets taking their orders from the party leadership.)

In Budapest, meanwhile, on October 23rd Hungarian university students, fed up with life under their country's Stalinist regime, openly demonstrated their sympathy with "the Polish road to socialism". By opening fire on the student demonstrators, the communist security forces unwittingly sparked off what would soon become a bloody anti-communist uprising. Amid the violence, Hungary's communist dictatorship collapsed, multi-party democracy was proclaimed and Hungary announced it was withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet bloc's military alliance.

The Hungarian events were widely reported by Poland's media and followed with great interest and sympathy. Poland sent medical goods and blood plasma to Hungary, and Polish troops escorted supply trains across Communist Czechoslovakia despite protests by the Czech Stalinist regime. Traditional bonds of Polish-Hungarian friendship were stressed, as illustrated by the saying: *Polak, Węgier dwa bratanki, i do szabli i do szklanki*. (The Pole and Hungarian are two of a kind, they fight side by side and drink the same wine.) The fact that a Polish general, Joseph Bem had been a leader of the 1848- 1849 Hungarian insurrection was also recalled and publicized.

By comparison, the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 was but a brief, though bloody episode. By November 4th Soviet troops had crushed the revolt and installed a puppet regime loyal to Moscow. Democratic leader Imre Nagy was tried and executed as a traitor. For the first time ever, Poland did not vote in the UN the way the Soviets did. When a resolution condemning the Soviet invasion of Hungary was voted on, the Polish delegate had been instructed by Warsaw to abstain. By the standards of the day, that was an unprecedented slap in the face to Moscow.

The Soviet crackdown on their brother Hungarians heightened the Poles' already strong anti-Russian feelings. At the same time, the bloody Budapest finale put a damper on open demonstrations of those sentiments. Instead, Poland concentrated on setting its own house in order.

The "June Events", as they came to be known, had led to the "Polish October". Poland, with its large private farm sector and influential Roman Catholic Church, had always been a "black sheep" among the family of Soviet satellites. Stalin once

derisively said that building communism in Poland was like trying to put a saddle on a cow. Now Poland would become even more unlike its Soviet-bloc neighbors.

The hated UB was (supposedly) dissolved and many former Stalinists were forcibly retired or given jobs devoid of political influence. Collective farms were disbanded, and private farmers were no longer required to turn all their produce over to the state. The Stalinist Polish Youth Union (*Związek Młodzieży Polskiej*) was dissolved and replaced by less ideological youth organizations. Many clubs and discussion circles free of communist control began emerging. Relatively free cultural expression was permitted, including jazz and abstract art which had once been banned as decadent.

Once he had firmly re-established himself in power, Gomułka put a stop to the liberalization drive. He referred to further reforms as "revisionism" and argued that "the influenza of dogmatism (hard-line communism) cannot be cured by the tuberculosis of revisionism". But there would never be a return to the police-state terror of the past.

Polish workers would again revolt in 1970, bringing down the Gomułka regime, in 1976 and in 1980. Each upheaval brought the country a few steps closer to what would finally occur in 1989: the re-emergence of a FREE AND INDEPENDENT POLAND.

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of retirement accounts you have or where they're held, they may be eligible for consolidation. Including:

IRAs held at financial institutions (banks, credit unions, mutual fund companies, etc.).

Retirement plan assets held at former employers including:

- 401(k) plans
- Profit-sharing plans
- Money purchase plans
- Defined benefit plans
- Keogh plans
- ESOP plans
- Government 457(b) plans
- 403(b) plans

**Consolidating Your Retirement Savings Is Easier Than You Think**

Depending on the types of retirement assets you want to consolidate, there are several ways to combine them into a single account.

**IRA-to-IRA transfers:** Ask the IRA custodian where you will be establishing your account to help you complete their IRA-transfer paperwork. Once you've set up your IRA, the custodian will do the rest, including contacting your previous IRA custodian(s) to get your assets moved over. There's no limit on the number of IRA-to-IRA transfers that you can complete in any given year. (However, please note that a Roth IRA can be consolidated only with another Roth IRA.)

**IRA-to-IRA rollovers:** You can ask your current IRA custodian to send you a check for the amount invested in your IRA. You will then have 60 days to deposit the funds into another IRA without incurring any current tax liability. Note that your former IRA custodian will report the amount as a distribution on IRS Tax Form 1099-R; your new IRA custodian will report the rollover contribution on IRS Tax Form 5498. If

you miss the 60-day time period, taxes and penalties may apply. IRA-to-IRA rollovers are restricted to one every 365 days per IRA.

**Direct rollover from qualified plan to an IRA:** Ask your previous employer(s) about the paperwork needed to complete a direct rollover of your qualified retirement plan assets to your IRA. The assets will be transferred once you complete the paperwork. Note that your former employer's plan will report the amount as a distribution on IRS Tax Form 1099-R; the IRA custodian will report the rollover contribution on IRS Tax Form 5498.

**Indirect rollover from qualified plan to an IRA:** Like the IRA-to-IRA rollover, you can ask your previous employer(s) to send you a check for your vested plan balance and then redeposit those funds into an IRA or other qualified retirement plan within 60 days. However, the plan trustee will be required to withhold 20% as mandatory federal withholding. You will need to make up that 20% when you redeposit the funds into an IRA or the amount withheld will be subject to taxes and possibly penalties if you are under age 59½.

Speak with your tax advisor about these and other rules that may apply when consolidating retirement plan assets.

**Some Final Thoughts about Consolidation**

Notwithstanding the many benefits to consolidating your retirement accounts, there are also some caveats to keep in mind. For example, while many qualified plans allow for loans, you cannot take a loan from an IRA. Thus, once you rollover a qualified plan into an IRA, the ability to take a loan is no longer available. **Note:** Few qualified plans allow loans to be taken out by former employees.

Another consideration is required minimum distributions. Upon reaching age 70½, owners of a traditional IRA must begin taking required minimum distributions or face stiff IRS penalties (except during 2009, as provided by the Worker, Retiree and Employer Recovery Act of 2008). If the plan permits, qualified plan participants can delay taking required minimum distributions if they are still working after attaining age 70 1/2.

That said, combining your retirement assets in a single IRA can help you take control of your financial future. Your tax and financial advisors will be able to assist you in determining if consolidation makes sense given your specific circumstances and goals. But don't wait any longer to find out. Your retirement will be here sooner than you think.

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