

During one of those coffeehouse sessions, I realized that the toy store next door was where as a very small child (still living in the Zoliborz district) my mom and I traveled to buy me my future favorite doll. Laura, a stunning blonde wearing a Little Red Riding Hood outfit, was literally a doll from the top shelf. The legend says that I stood near the door, guarding it, while my mom stood in a long line in order to purchase it (Christmas time), I wanted to make sure that no one walked away with "my Laura."

Years later, Newsweek's correspondent equipped with a camera was at that same spot and because of that, I can look at the picture and remember those times.

Polish-born TIME correspondent Gregory Wierzyński (uncle of Maciej Wierzyński, onetime main editor of Nowy Dziennik in NYC), reported that "news gathering in Warsaw came down to finding Polish friends who might know something - an account from a person who recently returned from another city or from a worker in one of the big plants outside of town." He was on assignment in Gdańsk.

Niedenthal took pictures in Warsaw for similar events but for a different magazine. Taking the pictures was relatively easy, but to get them out of the country was an even tougher task. One story says that he tried to make it to the Central Train Station before the police curfew hour (if you didn't have a valid permit you could not be on the street after a certain hour), and he convinced a German student to smuggle his photos to Berlin's Newsweek headquarters... and he did. This happened while correspondent Dave Burnet, an American, stayed in Warsaw with rolls of film made by others who left early to deceive the officials.

Wierzyński described the atmosphere as such: "I left behind my family and a country that only a few days ago was alive, blighted by penury perhaps, but sustained by freedom and hope. Now the country is in shock and oppressed by the belief that worse is yet to come."

It took a while...

Thanks to 10 million Solidarity members, the Holy Father and that Polish spirit that never rests... On June 4th, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism. If you missed it, it's because our media did not really pay much attention to it unlike the time when Martial Law was imposed and later when Communism truly fell and Lech Wałęsa made the covers of both TIME and Newsweek. But I cannot say the media is sitting around doing nothing... wait until November 11th and 12th and see how much fanfare the fall of the Berlin Wall will get on our news!

It was Polish actress Joanna Szczepkowska who during an interview, declared on national television... "On June 4 1989, communism in Poland came to an end..." and then there was a moment of silence. When she returned home, she found her apartment filled with flowers, but not cut flowers only plants as the elderly Poles had nothing to bring in appreciation so they brought their plants!

I don't have to remind you of the changes that followed as those of you who travel already know.

An exception may be the foreign reporters who like pre-conditioned Rick Steves in "Travel as a Political Act" in the part (a page in one chapter) dedicated to "Eastern Europe" talk about the post communism changes but gives no example besides the fact that now... "You don't have to take your windshield wipers off your car when you go home" and produces only a picture of the two men dressed in "krakowiak" folk costume.

Moskwa cinema is no more, it has been replaced by the Puławska Business Center which houses a sushi bar, pizzeria, and yes, a Silver Screen Cineplex, etc., but the

preconditioning of American journalists never ever alternates.

(I vote that every picture of the Big Apple or any signs of civilization be removed from Polish books and magazines and replaced by pictures of cowboys with lassos.)

I had some good memories of that theatre. Ironically the theater called Moskwa played all the American hit movies from Midway to E.T and Aliens and also the French / Canadian "The Guerre du Feu" a.k.a "Quest for Fire." I was not allowed to see that one without a proper ID, as it was rated R hence restricted. Although I was already an adult, I wasn't permitted to enter. Jacek and my cousin, Michael solidarized with me and did not enter either. We swore at the usher all the way home and returned later...

The gray façade of the building was "guarded" by two lions, which after several years after the cinema Moskwa was bulldozed, were returned as the Varsovians realized how much they miss the old ...

<http://justyna-polishdelight.blogspot.com/>

To be continued in July...

Zakrzewski from 2

change our lives and humiliate us. The crisis we face is within us. We have lost our moral beacon. We have become like the "salt that lost its taste." The world took notice and we lost respect.

I can speak of my own defining moments that have shaken my own belief in all that, this great country represented. First was a war under false pretense that constitutes a crime and a violation of international law. Next, which I find particularly appalling, is the use of torture sanctioned by the president and congress. I am a fourth generation Polish-American. I come from a nation that was subjected to torture by the Germans and the Soviets in most horrifying ways and I know of no regime on this earth, that would claim to torture for the wrong reasons. That is why Geneva Conventions forbid torture, make it a crime, and a morbid violation of human rights. Third was the "Patriot Act" which, what most Americans fail to see, in essence suspends our constitution. It allows to wiretap without court order, arrest without stating charges, deny representation by an attorney, hold imprisoned indefinitely and torture. All of this in the majesty of the law, if a person is "suspected" to be involved in terrorism. Anyone can suspect anybody of anything and define terrorism anyway he chooses. This is merely an instrument to silence anyone who becomes inconvenient. Instruments of abuse are put in place for a reason and history shows that once in place, when the next "phase" arrives they will be used.

Next was the visit to Columbia University by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. I made the effort of going to youtube and listening to the complete version of his speech and the introductory speech of Mr. Lee Bollinger, the president of Columbia University. I have never in my life, seen a display of arrogance more profound and embarrassing towards an invited guest and a head of state. If our "finest" represent that level of "culture" and "discourse", we truly have reached the gutter. In this clash of civilizations, it became evident, that we are no match for the 2500 years of Persian culture. Columbia University used to be one of the finest institutions of this country. Its mission, as is the case with any academia worthy of centuries old tradition, of promoting knowledge and understanding, has thus seen its last day. How can we even hope for any dialogue with such attitudes? It does not matter, how much pressure Columbia University was subjected to, from a certain lobby. We have been trying for too long, to see the world through someone else's eyeglasses

and may have suffered permanent eye damage. We see through those glasses darkly and in the process we have lost our soul.

Many will claim, that all this is a consequence of 9/11. One could rephrase it however, by stating that 9/11 was the pretext that allowed to change this country beyond recognition. Great changes require great wars and those require great crises. Calls for independent investigation of 9/11, by over 450 distinguished US scientists and experts of many fields have been ignored. In any criminal investigation the motive issue begins with the question "Who benefits?" Well, WHO did? "The Truth will set you free!" Are we ready to demand answers or to suffer consequences of ignorance?

We have a great heritage to fall back on, before it is too late. We have been blessed beyond measure and all we need to do is dust off our founding ideals and live them, so that this country, once again can be a beacon of hope and inspiration to the world. Let us remember on July 4, that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness." God blessed America, what did we do with it? ☐

Przystawa - paradigm from 4

However, a painful experience of Poland and other countries provides ample proof that this paradigm is false, deceiving societies and people. That in a majority of cases the outcomes of PR elections has nothing to do with equality and electoral justice. Rather, the opposite is true. Based on our experience we Poles have concluded that various applied PR formulae serve and suit well the successors of the communist parties - becoming a convenient and efficient instrument to safeguard their "soft landing" after the official collapse of communist regimes. The party-based electoral system of PR provides an umbilical cord tightening emerging new states with their communist predecessors.

There are some promising signs that perhaps a more sober view is surfacing and in various countries people are talking and even demanding a return to the old-fashioned way of electing representatives of the people via a majoritarian approach in single-seat constituencies. A few years ago such a demand was presented in the German Bundestag by Dr Michael Rogowski, the President of BDI (Bundesverband der deutschen Industrie). In 2007, Traian Basescu, the President of Romania decreed a national referendum on this issue. There is a well established and long standing national movement in Poland which works for the change and demands a referendum on the electoral system. The Movement collected nearly a million signatures under the referendum petition.

The false paradigm of PR being an untrue synonym of electoral justice should be thrown in a waste basket as soon as possible. It has caused enough damage already. It is time for a change.

The subject was presented to a Croatian audience during the Author's visit to the University of Zagreb, June 2009. ☐

Inglis - Constitution from 1

"answerable to no one," so no one could take him to court. In the US, the head of the executive branch was a president. He also had to follow the Constitution, but could be impeached and tried if the legislative branch felt that he broke the law. In both countries, the judicial branch interpreted the laws with texts that have been used for all constitutional matters.

There are as well many differences between the Constitutions of the two countries. Poland's Constitution defined the dominate national religion as the Roman Catholic faith, but stated that it was the Catholic teaching that all should have freedom of religion. The Polish Constitution described rights and responsibilities of various groups. At the beginning of the United States, America also had various groups, for instance African Americans that could be slaves and non-property owners that could not vote. The US Constitution made no mention of religion or freedom of religion, and defined no personal rights at all. Individual rights came with the Bill of Rights of December 1791, as the first addendum, or add-on, to the US Constitution, after the Polish Constitution was already in place. The US Constitution was about state rights and federal rights as well as the day-to-day functioning of government. The Polish Constitution gave nobility equality among themselves and gave them the right of property ownership, both of land and things movable. It specifically stated that neither the government nor the king could take anyone's property or things without explanation. City dwellers were given the same rights as nobles with the right to own land, the right to have a judge's ruling, not just the word of nobles, the right to hold civil office, the right to hold rank in the military, the right to have representation in the Sejm, the legislative branch, and the right to vote over city issues. Serfdom was abolished as peasants were given legal and civil rights. All persons were declared free and could live and work where they wished. The Polish Constitution clearly stated that any person, from any country, once in Poland, would be free. Besides all these major differences, there were many technical differences between the powers and balances of the three branches of government as well as differences in how changes in the Constitutions could be made.

Once the US made its Constitution, it was apart from Europe with room to grow and develop. Poland, on the other hand, was between Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Poland's Constitution was felt to be a threat to the other European sovereigns, especially Catherine the Great of Russia. It was felt that other Europeans could also want the rights given to Poles. Once Russia had managed to complete a series of battles with the Ottoman Turks, it turned its attention on Poland. Catherine the Great of Russia wanted to make sure that the ideas developing in Poland would not spread. She sent the Russian army to Poland to force it to declare its Constitution void, which it did within one year. Still some groups of Poles continued to resist. Over the course of three partitions, Poland was taken off the map in 1794, only to return in 1918, some 125 years later.

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