

**Berlin Wall from 1****1968. Why did your Solidarność labour union succeed where others failed?**

The communists always beat back such attempts with their superior power. And they also staged demonstrations aimed at showing their support among the population as a way of establishing legitimacy. In 1980 in the shipyards, we tried to use the communists' strategy against them. We organised the people -- including workers outside of the shipyards -- and we received support from people from other countries. The Pope, who played the most important role, arranged a collective prayer, not just in Poland but also elsewhere. We found that there were millions of us. For the first time, the communists were not able to stage a demonstration that was larger than ours. As a result, they felt weak, and this was an important element in their ultimate defeat. Still, even until late in the 1980s, it wasn't clear that communism was headed for collapse. Did you really believe that the Soviets would sit back and allow communist governments in Eastern Europe to be overthrown?

The greatest fears I had came out of concern for what might be happening behind the scenes. We defeated communism, and the people in East Germany began to flee via the embassies of other countries. The Berlin Wall fell because of these deserters. I was worried that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev would decide to block the mass escape and thus destroy our victory. The game was a dangerous one. It is good that Gorbachev was a weak politician and that everything went well. But that's now history so we can accept the pictures from Berlin as they are. They are indeed beautiful.

Last week, former US President George H. W. Bush, ex-Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Gorbachev were in Berlin to discuss the end of the Cold War. Certainly Western pressure was one reason that Gorbachev didn't act to block the East German exodus?

The politicians always told us that the Cold War stand-off could only change by way of nuclear war. None of them believed that such systemic change was possible. They now express gratitude to the people for having made the changes possible, but at the same time they present themselves as the fathers of German reunification. In truth, they were only accidental fathers of the fall of the Wall -- forced into action by the masses.

**Why were they so taken by surprise?**

Because they are true politicians. Politicians count everything: they compare the number of tanks, missiles and guns possessed by each side. And the wiser the politician was -- the better the computer model they used -- the more impossible the fall of the Berlin Wall appeared. Even today, if you were to enter the same data into a computer, the answer would be the same: no chance. But revolutionaries think differently.

**How so?**

There were great changes taking place in the Soviet Union and a number of leadership changes had taken place, with one Soviet leader after another dying. Such a situation necessarily leads to some destabilisation. At the same time, we began mobilising the masses and Gorbachev didn't know what to do. He had little choice but to accept things as they were -- just shooting at the masses would not have been enough because there were too many of us. The career politicians were unable to see that.

Many, of course, see things differently. The Americans, for example, are fond of pointing to Reagan's "Tear Down this Wall" speech as being a decisive event leading to its fall. The Russians point to perestroika.

Normal people from Germany, Russia and the US have shown us more support. But the politicians have merely toyed with the memory of the event. That's why when

I see images of Bush, Kohl and Gorbachev under the headline "Three Fathers of the Fall of the Wall," it looks more like chance to me than anything. They merely implemented the desires expressed by the people.

**Are those desires accurately reflected by the Poland and the Europe of today?**

If someone had told me before I began the struggle that I would one day live in a Poland and Europe like that of today, I would never have believed it. But even so, when I look back and see all the chances that we missed, I am not satisfied. It is something I always say: I am for it, but I am also against it.

**What sort of missed chances are you talking about?**

Walesa: Democracy is made up of three elements. One is whether the laws support pluralistic principles. The second is whether the people take advantage of these laws. The third element is whether the peoples' wallets are thick enough to benefit from this democracy. In Poland, we have the legal foundation for democracy. We haven't proven very adept at taking advantage of it however. And the situation of our wallets is even worse.

**You haven't held a political office in Poland since your defeat in the 1995 presidential election to the ex-communist Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Yet you have remained a voice in Polish politics and have at times been vocal in your criticism of Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński. It seems like you feel your political work is not yet done.**

There is a risk right now that we might lose the victory that we fought so hard for. The question is whether we have learnt from our experiences or whether we need another whack upside the head from history. The masses learnt, but after the victory the masses handed power back to the politicians. And they forget that it was we who won the victory. We might have to set the masses in motion once again.

**You count yourself as one of the masses and not as a politician?**

Yes. But I belonged to that part of the masses that fought hard for victory over communism. I risked my life. And we won this victory, but the politicians ignore it. The victory over communism came thanks to the shipyards and thanks to the Holy Father. But now, nobody mentions the Holy Father. Nobody mentions Solidarność. The past isn't everything, but one cannot build a future on such a foundation -- and that's why I am trying to speak up today.

**Why wasn't Solidarność able to continue as a political power in Poland after it mobilised the masses to bring down communism?**

One can't just replace an old system with a new one. We won and then presented our victory to our country, to Germany and to Europe. Of course it's messy, but our task was not to replace communism, rather it was to enable the development of something else. In this regard, I acted against my own self-interest. A number of political parties sprang up after the defeat of communism and I couldn't belong to them all. I could no longer play the great Walesa. Ultimately, I weakened my own power, but it was more out of choice because I didn't want my name to be equated with that of Kim Il Sung or Lenin. Thus, I had to submit to political defeat in the name of democracy. That is my fate -- the fate of a true revolutionary. □

**Justyna Ball from 2**

I was strongly against installation of the anti-missile bases on Polish soil, but I do believe that Poland needs to create its own defense system. Of course they cannot counter Russia, but they can make Russians pay in case of an attack.

Besides, the US won't risk war with Russia over Poland just like Russians did not risk war with the US over Cuba.

Poles do not trust anybody. They had a bad experience with allies after WWII. In the last months, on several occasions Poles had a chance to rethink their relations with others (their invitation to the anniversary of D-Day somehow got lost in the mail...although we all know that Poles participated in the operation.) For Poland and the US, this is also the end of the "love affair" that was never actually there...which should be healthy for Poland. From now on their policies should switch from pleasing US government in exchange for...nothing to the "country's business is the priority" tactic.

The most recent news is that the goose became the meal of choice. From now on, millions of Poles will celebrate Nov 11th, its Independence Day (when after 123 years of partitions) with a goose. And the myth of goose being fatty is just what it is, a myth.

Give it time, and it is going to be as big as a turkey at the Thanksgiving table. Poles are quick. Many restaurants around the country already serve it, so dear countrymen, braised goose from now on!

What's the better way to commemorate this historical event if not by setting the table and inviting friends. If we don't enlighten them about Poland's history who will? □

**Storożyński article from 1**

slaughtered more people than Adolf Hitler and the Nazis did.

Hitler and Stalin were allies and started World War II in 1939 by both attacking Poland at the same time. But William McIntosh, the D-Day Memorial's president says that because Stalin became a U.S. ally after Germany invaded Russia, he deserves to be acknowledged along with Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

McIntosh is wrong. Stalin only gave lip service to the allies so that they would attack Nazi Germany on the Western front. Stalin did not liberate Eastern Europe from the Nazis in 1945; he sent in Soviet troops that occupied half of Europe until the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. Stalin the communist barely hid his disdain for capitalist America during WWII, and once the war ended, he began the Cold War and ordered his scientists to work on missiles and nuclear weapons that could destroy the United States.

Given McIntosh's logic, should America put up a statue of Saddam Hussein because he was an ally of the U.S. in the 1980s when we supported Iraq in a war against Iran?

Congress authorized the D-Day Memorial and private donors raised \$19 million to honor soldiers that fought in the invasion of Normandy. Now McIntosh is lobbying Congress to make his museum part of the National Park Service so that it can receive federal tax dollars.

By placing a bust of Stalin on hallowed ground, McIntosh disrespects veterans, including my father who took part in the Normandy invasion. When the war began, Dionysius Storożyński was 17 and living in Lwów, Poland. He fought in the underground against Stalin's army that invaded Poland and later joined the Polish troops in France that fought the Germans in the West. When France surrendered, he was evacuated to England and trained for the allied invasion of Normandy.

In 1944, when the beachhead was taken, Corporal Storożyński rode a motorcycle off a transport from England as part of the 24th Lancers Regiment of the 1st Polish

Armored Division. It was led by Major Jan Kański with 47 officers, 634 men, 52 Sherman tanks, 11 Stuart tanks and six anti-aircraft tanks. My father sped ahead of these troops, and scoured the French countryside with his binoculars. He radioed the coordinates of the Germans to Polish Tank Commanders. Gen. Dwight Eisenhower inspected my father's regiment, which saw heavy action in Caen, Falaise and Aberville in France. They helped liberate Belgium and Holland.

During the campaign, my father lost part of his hearing when he drove over a land mine. Major Kański lost his life.

My maternal grandfather, Sgt. Władysław Krzyzanowski, also fought in the Polish Army against Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. In 1939 he was tortured and sentenced to death by Stalin's NKVD, forerunner of the KGB. His crime? He fought against Stalin's ally at the time, Hitler. My grandfather's sentence was commuted to life, and he was one of 1.5 million Poles sent to Stalin's forced labor gulags in Siberia in the years 1939-1941. He escaped and joined the army of Polish Gen. Władysław Anders that fought alongside British General Bernard Montgomery. The Brits and the Poles pushed the Germans across North Africa and together with the American military liberated Italy. My grandfather won medals at the Battle of Monte Cassino.

Other Polish soldiers were not as lucky. The NKVD took 22,000 Polish officers into the Katyn Forest, tied their hands behind their backs, and one by one shot them in the back of their heads. The bodies were dumped into mass graves. Many have yet to be recovered for proper burial.

That's how Stalin treated prisoners of war. He wasn't much better to his own people. Before World War II began, the NKVD killed millions of Russians during the "great purge" of Stalin's political enemies. Stalin forced collectivization, stole farmland from peasants, and starved to death 10 million Ukrainians in a vengeful act of genocide. And it was Stalin's 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact with Hitler that split Poland in half, allowing the Germans to carry out the Holocaust that murdered six million Jews.

Stalin enslaved the Russian people. That's why Russia has taken down most of the statues of Stalin and Russian President Dimitri Medvedev is critical of those who gloss over Stalin's image. "From the point of view of the law, killing of a huge number of compatriots for political or unsubstantiated economic motives is a crime," Medvedev recently told Der Spiegel magazine. "The rehabilitation of those involved in these crimes is impossible."

In addition to the civilians that Stalin murdered, he sent Russian soldiers to their death by using them as cannon fodder, marching them directly into the line of German gunfire without a cohesive battle plan. Medvedev said recently on his web site, "Stalin's crimes cannot diminish the heroic deeds of the people who triumphed in the Great Patriotic war."

If McIntosh wants to honor Russia's contribution to the victory over Nazi Germany, he should put up a statue of the Unknown Russian Soldier. That would make more sense than a bust of Stalin.

It took the people of the former Soviet Empire five decades to right the wrongs of Stalin's "evil empire," as Ronald Reagan called it. These days, the Poles are planning to put up a statue of Reagan in Warsaw to acknowledge his role in ending Soviet Communism. How ironic that in Virginia, America is putting up a bust of Stalin. □

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