

Narration for the Lech Walesa Interview.

#### FIRST THREE MINUTE: INTRODUCTION

##### **Narrator speaks directly to audience.**

In August 1980, workers occupied the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk and won from their communist overlords the right to form independent trades unions – a concession unprecedented in the history of the communist world. They formed a union called “Solidarity” lead by a shipyard electrician “Lech Walesa”. Later they would overthrow the tyrannical Communist system.

Why did the revolution happen in Poland? What was the relationship between Solidarity and the Communist regime? How did the West react to Solidarity? And how did Lech Walesa become the hero / leader during the tumultuous events of the next sixteen months? Sixteen months which culminated in the declaration of martial law and the banning of Solidarity and arrest of its leaders.

Poland’s example has been scrutinized by the Iranian intellectual community, both inside and outside the country, as a society that succeeded in shedding its totalitarian system and successfully replacing it with a democratic one using an active, non-violent methodology. *[However, the focus of Iranians has been on the more recent examples of national liberation: South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, the Former Yugoslavia, and extensive attention is given to Gandhi and India. A people and nation culturally the closest to Iran and Iranian “Erfan” (classical Iranian theology).]*

The similarities of the situation in Iran today, and Poland under Communist rule just a couple of decades ago are remarkable. So much so that the Producer of this interview took an interest in the history of Poland and the Polish experience.

You will be surprised to see how similar the Iranian situation is today to that of Poland under Communism, despite the distance of time, culture and apparently philosophy of life.

#### FOURTH MINUTE: SIMILARITIES TO IRAN (Film of Gdansk and pictures of Polish nobility)

Having arrived in Poland my first question was why are we Iranians calling this nation Lah-istan and its natives are calling it Polska. It turns out that legend has it that there were once three brothers, Czech, Rus and Lech (Pronounced Lekh). They went on to found countries named Czech, Russia and Poland. For some reason we have been referring to the country by the name of it’s mythological founder Lah or as pronounced today Lech.

It was interesting to learn that the Polish nobility (known as the Schlakhta) considered themselves not as Slavic people but as descendents of the Sarmatians, an Iranian people. Prior to Christianity, they worshipped fire as a symbol of the sun. They still have a ceremony of jumping over a fire once every year when spring becomes summer, and traditional girls release a wreath of flowers into a flowing stream of water upon a marriage. The Polish nobility, kept many artefacts from old Iran in their mansions and palaces, in fact today the Polish museums are well endowed with Iranian artwork from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14 century, especially armour and miniatures, as compared with say Japanese

or any of their trading partners. Today, the Polish word for God and for heaven is the same as those of pre-Islamic Iran. Could they really be somehow related to the Iranians?

#### **SIXTH MINUTE: BRIEF HISTORY**

**(Pictures from book on Poland)**

Country was founded in 966, one thousand years ago by Mieszko (pronounced Mieshko). A brave warrior who was the first to adopt Christianity. Prior to that Poles worshipped fire as a symbol of the sun.

From 1569-1795, while the world only knew of Monarchies, for a period of 250 years the Polish-Lithuanians had an “elective monarchy”. Weakness leads to 3 partitions of country. 1794 uprising against Russians, 1830 uprising again, 1863 uprising again, 1905 revolution. In 1918 after Russian revolution and Russia’s subsequent weakness, an independent Poland became a reality again.

#### **SEVENTH MINUTE. CONTEMPORARY HISTORY**

**(Film from Inside Solidarity Museum)**

In 1939, World War 2 starts when Germans and later Russians attack and occupy Poland. A quarter of the population of Poland are killed or deported to concentration camps. At the start of WW2, Poland is betrayed by the Russians at Katyn, where tens of thousands of Polish officers are taken to the Katyn forest and executed. This was then blamed by the Russians on the Germans. At the end of WW2, Poland is betrayed by the British at Yalta, where in a private meeting between Churchill and Stalin with American president Roosevelt absent, the British acquiesced to handing over Poland to the Russians. Something unbelievable considering the reason Britain entered the second world war was due to German occupation of Poland, and the Polish armed forces exiled to Britain participated in Britain’s war effort, especially as pilots in the battle of Britain, and sustained considerable casualties.

Poland is partitioned a 4<sup>th</sup> time and in the years 1945-1947 there is a civil war.

The years following World War 2 were difficult ones for the Poles. The military were skilfully purged and replaced with strongly indoctrinated officers, student protests were brutally crushed and the workers had deliberately set up regional structure, instead of an hierarchical one, as a defence against the deliberate ‘divide and rule’ tactics of the new pro-Soviet Communist authorities. In these years, the workers leaders were easily bought by the Communist who would give some of them offices, as luxurious as possible, to give some workers a taste of power. The Communist rationalized that they did not know anyone who is not corrupted by power. (Possibly in reference to their own selves).

It is at this time that a young 27-year-old man enters the political scene.

#### **ADDITIONAL ONE MINUTES SHOWING SCENES OF SOLIDARITY MUSEUM**

**TENTH MINUTE:**

## INTERVIEW FILM WITH LECH WALESZA STARTS HERE:

### NARRATION BREAK POINT A:

(Between Questions 9 and 10)

Soviet Communism was a malignant ideology and a mask for the unchanging ambitions of Russian Imperialism. As expected their proxy government in Poland would always play the RED or DEAD card, meaning accept our dictatorship, or the Red Army will invade again.

But what we were surprised to learn was that much of General Jaruzelski's "terrorism from above" not only came from the West, but also was paid for by the West! Truncheons, teargas and percussions grenades came to the ZOMO courtesy of companies in West Germany and Japan, likewise their communications equipment. The newest computers for interior ministry were from Siemens, these were used during the 16 months of freedom given to Solidarity to precisely target and arrest the leading Solidarity activist when the subsequent crack was announced.

West German bankers greeted the 1981 military crackdown and takeover with relief. The General would make the trains run on time they would say. "Who knows which political system works?" said head of Citi-bank Europe. "The only test we care about is: can they pay their bill?"

Instead, we would have expected the West would have seized the opportunity to help the people of Poland instead of it's unelected regime, particularly when the opportunity was created by the courage of others fighting for values which the West profess. However, we found instead detente by West Germany with Soviets was an investment not merely economic, political, and diplomatic, it was a profound intellectual and emotional investment as well. It was the American influence that pushed for the popular sovereignty of Poland, and resulted in the collapse of the Soviet backed regime.

The communist ruling class puts its own monopoly of power before the prosperity of its subjects, political security before economic success. Ideally, the Communist Government wished to use Western economic support to stabilize and strengthen their regimes. The European logic behind helping the communist regime in Poland went like this: Because its leaders felt more secure, due to Western assistance in creating a more modern, efficient, militarized dictatorship (a Police welfare state) the leaders where able and willing to grant its citizens slightly more freedoms, freedom to read, freedom to speak, freedom to travel. (So long as they did not presume to interfere in their own internal affairs, that is!)

However, so long as Poland's Soviet bloc allies, or the west, did not give Jaruzelski the means to compensate the workers for the loss of their freedoms, the chances of successful 'normalization' were almost nil. In the 1980's, Poland was a society that 'organized' itself in independent networks of Solidarity, not simply in opposition to, but in contempt of, the failed Party State. The Vision of a tiny minority of so-called 'dissidents' in Dec 1979 had

become a mass consciousness of Dec 1981.

#### NARRATION BREAK POINT B:

(Between Questions 21 and 22)

President Lech Walesa's reference to 200 million killed by communist in the last century refers to the tens of millions killed in Russian concentration camps, the tens of millions killed due to the famines and wars initiated by the Soviet Communists, as well as the many tens of millions killed in China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia etc.

This matter highlights one of the 'intolerable' facts faced by the left side of the political spectrum in Western Europe. They were embarrassed that the Polish Solidarity saga meant that workers would bow to a priest and so they played down role of church. Another intolerable fact for them was that more people were killed in 1930's by Stalin than by Hitler in the Holocaust and here they had before them Solidarity as arguably the first "Authentic" workers revolution in History! (The October revolution was not led by workers, but by Bolsheviks in the name of the workers class.)

And hence the support from the left side of the Western European spectrum was not as forthcoming as we would have expected, despite their shared desire to overthrow Soviet Communism.

President Lech Walesa pointed out in this interview that by "the Left" he means those who say: "I don't believe in God, and I believe in state property" and by "the Right" he means those who say: "I believe in God and private property" as a first criterion, and he believed in between these two distinct view points comes all other spectrum of political thoughts. His second differentiation was between moderates, radicals and working people.... What was obvious in our meeting was that the Word Socialism was poisoned for the Solidarity activist by the experience of living under it. A Joke during the dark days of communism in Poland was: Rabbi - Can one build Socialism in one country? "Yes my son, but one must live in another"

#### NARRATION BREAK POINT C:

(At the very end maybe??)

The Polish people would ask the Western Government that where so keen on supporting the Communist regime in their country, "Whom do you think you are helping to do what?" "What makes a foreign policy democratic is its respect for the wishes of the majority in the country affected as well. Else it's a policy for the support of dictatorship"

They asked the West to start thinking the impossible, moving beyond the Yalta Agreement that betrayed the Polish nation into a dark tunnel of misery and stagnation.

As in Poland, against the difficulties and the risk to liberate our own country, we must put the magnitude of the opportunity. In fact, the difficulties and the risk are the measure of the opportunities.