

“Erasing Russia From Europe”

By Tatiana Pahlen

It's not easy being a monument harkening back to darker times. In Poland in particular, the government wants to remove all statues depicting Russian soldiers. Are we going too far in erasing our histories?

There is a small village with a group of volunteers and especially one man – Polish activist, Jerzy Tyc, is no fan of the Nazis. Who is? He spends his own money working to restore many fading monuments to Soviet soldiers who fought the Germans in Poland in World War II. He restores the marble and iron works. He paints them with rust proof paints. The world being what it is today, he was asked if he is doing this with an order from the Kremlin. Tyc replied: “No. This is in memory of my mother.”

[One Polish Man's Fight to Save Soviet War Memorials](#)



One Polish Man's Fight to Save Soviet War Memorials

For years, Moscow and Warsaw have been locked in a heated debate over the fate of monuments to the 600,000 Soviet...

When Tyc's mother was 13 years old living in a small Polish village those Soviet soldiers gathered young kids and sent them to safe places far away from the frontline before they began a final fight against the Germans. She never forgot it. Her son is alive because of it. So the monuments to unknown Russian soldiers is an ode to his mother, not the Soviet Union that later became an oppressive power to Poland.

It is that more recent past that irks the Polish government enough to pass a law to wipe the Red Army out of Poland's landscape. This isn't like the Confederate Army soldier statues of Robert E. Lee being torn down in the South, considered an ode to racism to the black community. To compare the two would be like saying Robert E. Lee, once an ally to African slaves, later became its biggest enemy. He was never their ally, nor did he lift a finger for their freedoms. Russia did, regardless of what happened years later in pie cutting agreements made in Ukraine's Crimea on how the new Western powers will divvy up the world with the Russians post World War II.

So here we have Polish leader Andrzej Duda on June 22, the very anniversary of the dreadful day when the German forces attacked Soviet Union to announce that their equivalent of 648 soldier statues are coming down. The message: the Russians were never on your side.

But they were.

Recently, the Russian Defense Department published its archives online documenting reaction from the official Polish government and its people at the time. The documents showed that Poles were grateful for their liberation; they treated Red army soldiers with more respect than their own countrymen.

But that was about 70 years ago. Times have changed. The narrative has slowly been revised and the new generation believes that the Soviet Army was not a friend, but a foe, always an occupant. Germany, oddly, is often glamorized as a fighter of an evil Bolshevism. Seriously? The Nazis?

There were no objections to this law by anyone from the European Union. The press was quiet but Russian Senate considers to slap sanctions on Polish Government. Here is a link.

<http://www.newsweek.com/russia-punish-soviet-union-memorials-war-poland-641596>



Russian politicians want to punish Poland for removing Soviet WWII memor...

Poland is removing all statues and memorials to totalitarian regimes, including those to Soviet soldiers.

Only one country stood up and signed an agreement with the Russian Federation to veto the Polish law. That's Israel of all places. One would think that Israel, which was created out of the fall out from that awful war, would know a thing or two about Nazi Germany in Poland. About one thousand Russian Jews from the Soviet Army live in Israel. Some of them were among others to liberate Auschwitz prisoners and witnessed the atrocities of the German Nazis.

Given the climate in Europe, which has taken its cue from Washington, no one cries for Russian statues. The monuments will come down. Tyc might save one, if he's lucky. But we are forgetting that Russia was our ally in World War II. And in taking down these monuments, Poland is contributing to an ugly division between Moscow and Brussels, Moscow and London, and Moscow and Washington which continues to firmly place Russia in the boogey man category. They were the bad guys. They are the bad guys. They will probably always be the bad guys. So, off they go.

It is not without historical precedence that Russia's erasure is happening in Poland. Poland is like Ground Zero in the age-old battle between Russia and Western Europe.

Let's face it, Poland was accepted into the European Union in May, 2004 with one aim: to irritate the Russians. They're not even full-fledged members of the EU, as Poland does not use the euro nor does it go along with migrant policies of the European Parliament. Yet, Poland's ongoing disdain (dare I say hatred?) towards Russia was originated and packaged in Washington. Tearing down Russian memory from the country is simply a good idea.

But there is another truth here, too. It's not a terrible one. The Soviet Red Army liberated Poland from fascism during World War II, leaving about 600,000 Russians and other members of the Soviet Union, namely Ukrainians, still in Poland to this day.

Why do we insist on calling them the bad guys? At what point do we stop going back to rewrite history? Is there anything to learn from it? Last I checked, concentration camps are still standing to remember the horror. If there is one thing to erase, one would think it would be that. Why do we insist on sticking it to the Russians and then sit back in awe when their government expresses concern for such overwhelming belittlement?

Poland is facing its own Confederate monument moment. Only it at least has some of the victims of the war to which those monuments were erected in the first place believing they should still remain.

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