# Stolen Lives



Jan Kusmirek

*''Do not leave the graves of soldiers with broken souls. Do not leave with a sense of defeat and hopelessness, but with an irrefutable belief that in this spirit grow new values; the values are not mine, not yours, but for all of us - the value of belonging to the whole nation. It is necessary to keep the memory of them ever lasting and living. "*

***Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly***

## DEDICATION

To the memory of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, who recognised the strengths and weaknesses of the Old Polish Commonwealth, and to the varied ethnic and religious groups who made its strengths in diversity; and for those Cursed Soldiers whom people chose to forget and abandon.

# FOREWORD

*Stolen Lives* is a political spy thriller. Teddy Labden continues his story of betrayals and trust in a world of politics and war as described in the novel *The Engineer*.

Set mostly in Eastern Europe many of the events in this fictional work happened and some people existed. This is a story of heroism. This is the story of many people who have never had the opportunity to speak. I hope they call to you through this novel. Eastern Europe still remains for many westerners a strange, separated world.

Poor history teaching has led the young people of Europe to have a lack of understanding of their past and heritage. Leftist politics has tried to portray history teaching as narrow nationalism rather than admitting to the crimes and ineptitude of the Socialist and Communist systems. Such are inconvenient reminders of their own duplicity and betrayals of the common people. Put another way, we all know that the Germans were at one time the bad guys, but few know that the worst of crimes were perpetrated bythe Soviets and that both countries were Socialist by name.

Common people fought against Communism and the Soviet Union throughout Eastern Europe long after the Second World War. For Poland the WW2 began in 1939 and ended in 1989. Few today realise this. It is inconvenient and provokes thoughts of responsibility. This is the background to the story of Stolen Lives. Westerners little realise that these 'partisans' had to fight the West too. The Cold War was cheaper than supporting peoples far away from the West's shores. The armed struggle went on well into the fifties.

Teddy Labden, who now prefers to be called by his proper name Tadeusz or 'Tadek' Labycz, works for the freedom of his country and to reveal the duplicity of politicians 'fighting' a cold war that was little more than a charade. Proxy wars were being fought worldwide with colossal loss of lives in the name of freedom on both sides. From Africa to Vietnam, soldier boys died and people cried.

A mad line was drawn across Europe dividing two ideologies. Yet who created the line? Teddy Labden has a shrewd idea. He uncovers plot and counter-plot that destroy the potential of peace sacrificed to the political vanity and self-interest of power-hungry politicians.

The story unfolds to show the complicity of government security services that traded information in a club of self-interest and exchange which destroyed ordinary people, yet preserved the reputations of politicians at all costs.

Tadek and his friend become involved in the murder of Stalin and the exposure of the extent to which the American and British secret Services have been penetrated by the Soviets. They soon realise that the failure to deal with these real threats to the West lie with the Security Services' desire to cover up politicians' errors rather than expose national threats.

In the end they lose the fight, the system wins, the people lose. But Marie Antoinette said, "If the people have no bread let them eat cake." In 2009 it was different; "never mind the lack of equipment for our forces, let us save the planet in 2080."

**Jan Kusmirek, July 2009**

# NOTES ON POLISH NAMES

Polish belongs to the Slavic language group. Eastern Slavs use the Cyrillic alphabet whereas Western Slavs use the Latin. The Polish language, like those of the Czechs and Slovaks, has a number of letters and sounds foreign to most Western languages.

The Polish language uses a lot of subtle sibilants. There is little difference to an untrained ear between an rz and a ż! It seems that Westerners find Slav names difficult to pronounce even if they are given a list of equivalent sounds.

Unlike in *The Engineer,* in the text of the last two volumes of the trilogy *Chronicles of Love and Honour,* Polish spelling is mostly used for names. Sometimes an English name appears alongside to give some meaning or context. The partisan *Łoś,* for example, is also named as *Elk*, and *Warsaw* is correctly written as the Polish *Warszawa*. However, I chose quite deliberately to mix the usage so the reader will find no strict continuity. Perhaps this forms part of a hidden learning curve!

Don't let names spoil your enjoyment, just go at them like a hurdle and see what you come up with; make your own nearest equivalent. If you want to be more accurate, some assistance is given below. Whatever you do, do not let strange names spoil your enjoyment and reading pleasure!

Below is a list of Polish letters and their sounds:-

The Polish Alphabet contains 32 letters. Specific to Polish are the letters: ą, ć, ę, ł, ń, ó, ś, ź, ż. Ą, Ć, Ę, Ł, Ń, Ó, Ś, Ź, Ż.

**Approximate Pronunciation of Polish letters which differ from English:-**

A – sounds like "a" in the word "Apple"
C – sounds like "ts" in the word "Tsar"
E – sounds like "e" in the name "Elsa"
G – sounds like "g" in the word "fog"
H – sounds like "h" in the word "hello"
I – sounds like "ea" in the word "beam"
J – long "i" sounds like "y" in word "bye"
K – sounds like "c" in the word "colour"
O – sounds like "o" in the word "top"
U – sounds like "oo" in thw word "pool"
W – sounds like "v" in the word "love"
Y – sounds like "y" in the word "pity"

Ą – nasal A, sounds like french "bon bon" or "ow" in the word "own"
Ć – sounds like Chinese "chi"
Ę – sounds like "en" in the word "engine"
Ł – sounds like "w" in the word "wedding"
Ń – sounds like the word "knee"
Ó – sounds like the double o in "pool"
Ś – sounds like "sh" in the word "ship"
Ź – sounds like "ge" in the word "genie"
Ż – sounds like "g" in the word "mirage"

Double letter sounds in Polish are: CH CZ DŹ DŻ DZ RZ SZ; they all pronounced like one letter, with the exception of DŹ DŻ DZ, which are read in usual way.

CH – sounds like a Polish “h” with a rough edge
CZ – sounds like “ch” in the word “chocolate”
RZ – sounds like Polish “ż”
SZ – sounds like “sh” in the word “gosh”

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# PROLOGUE ~ THE ZOO

The bear sighed, long and deep. He watched his black shiny nostrils expand and contract with the effort of exhaling long-lost memories, boredom and restless defeat. What else was there to do except eat, sleep and watch flies and humans? His ears twitched and caught the tinkling sound of a child's voice. His tawny eyes stared fixedly at the round hole, a blob of seemingly ever dancing light. Grey light today but flashes of sunshine. Light that was always cold. Light that gave a hue to this concrete bunker that humans felt was how a cave should be. Cold, grey and very lonely: a mausoleum. But then, those people who study bears know what is best for a bear, he surmised, and then growled.

Iran was always sunny - well mostly; and yes, it snowed there, but somehow it was not wet and damp and cold like here in Edinburgh. Libya was just hot, but the sun made you happy despite the flies and hell. Italy, well, that was hot in another way. Running up and down rocks and dodging bullets. The bear grunted as he thought of Italy and his lost comrades. "Jesus, Mary," the bear thought, "oh for a fag and a quiet smoke… and those damn do-gooders never let me drink beer any more."

At least someone had the sense to provide a bench for him to sit on and watch the human world roll by. He heaved himself on to his paws and padded over the dusty cold concrete to see who this squeaking child was. His joints were stiff now with rheumatism, and he dreamed of wrestling and games with the lads.

Most of the humans were foreigners speaking that guttural high-speed English cross-border language. He had learned to recognise the more refined accent of Edinburgh from the coarser Glasgow, but he missed the soft sibilance and tonal qualities of his own people. He missed the rise and fall of Polish chatter. He also learned refined tones meant fewer buns!

The boy pointed excitedly as the bear appeared. His mother said, "See Janek, there is Wojtek the Soldier bear, just as I told you!"

"No Mummy, it's not said 'Wojtek', but like 'Voytek' - that's the proper Polish way."

"Ah, a boy with sense and a proper name," the bear thought to himself.

"Why did they lock the soldier bear up here, Mummy?" the boy asked as he held his mother's hand tightly, leaning as far forward as he could to get the best view of this famous bear.

“He had nowhere to go to, no home to go back to,” she answered.

“We were betrayed!” the bear roared deep from his throat.

Mother and child jumped back, startled by the ferocity of the sound.

A man standing by chuckled and said, “Don’t be alarmed, you just touched a nerve with him. Said the wrong thing.”

“I know the bear’s a war hero,” the mother said, “but please don’t tell me he understands English!”

“Most probably Polish, actually,” the stranger replied. “I don’t think his English is that good.”

The stranger spoke with a slight North American twang to his voice. He called to the bear in rapid soft Polish.

The bear relaxed and smiled, coming close to the perimeter.

“Do you by chance have a cigarette,” he asked the mother. She hesitated. Was this a pick-up? But he looked all right. Middle height, blue eyes that had a look of mischief. Clean-shaven. Long fawn raincoat, yellow silk scarf and brown trilby. Shoes well polished and good brown brogues, altogether well-to-do and quite posh for these parts.

She realised that she had been looking him up and down, and she blushed as his eyes followed hers and held her gaze. “Oh yes,” she said, “do have one.”

He extracted a cigarette and she noticed his well-manicured but longer than usual nails.

“And a light.” She proffered a chromed lighter which he flicked into flame, lit the cigarette and inhaled.

He turned to the bear, who watched him intently, and deftly flicked the cigarette towards the bear. Who equally deftly caught it and promptly stuck it into the side of his jaws and shuffled back to the cave.

Mother and child looked aghast. They both laughed. Eyes wide and surprised.

“The bear’s full story has yet to be told,” he said. “He fought with the Polish Army 2nd Corps from beginning to end. And now look at him, like the rest of them, grateful for a handout.” His voice had hardened with a trace of bitterness.

“My daddy was a Polish soldier,” the boy added into the talk as he tugged at the man’s sleeve to get attention. “He died in the war,” he added.

“At Monte Casino,” the woman added quietly.

The stranger looked at her for a moment. She expected the usual, “I’m sorry, dear,” but just got, “You have beautiful eyes,” as he turned to walk away. He knelt down, though, to confront the little boy eye to eye. He held him by the shoulders. “You remember who you are. You are Jan or Janek, never John or Johnny. Both your mummy and daddy were brave in different ways. You remain true to them and where your daddy came from, don’t let Britain own you.

The stranger stood and looked at the woman.

“I saw what youse did to that animal!” A raucous shout came from the advancing uniformed zoo keeper. “Its against the rules, I’ll have the law on youse!”

The stranger replied in an altered tone in best upper class English, “Oh do stop blathering, Johnny, and run away, there’s a good man.”

Tadek Labycz walked away to his meeting, smiling at the thought of a more contented bear.

# CHAPTER 1 ~ MEETINGS

As Teddy turned out of the park gates he saw the cream and maroon double-decker bus taking on its last few passengers. He saw the conductor turn and press the bell and the bus began its journey toward the city centre. Mentally Teddy calculated the distance at fifty yards. He clutched his hand to his trilby and began to sprint, gabardine raincoat flapping awkwardly against his legs. He saw the conductor glance his way and also calculate the distance. He saw the conductor press the bell again. The bus driver must have seen him in the mirror too, and slowed slightly. The last 10 yards required that extra spring. Teddy grabbed the cold, chromed rail and jerked up onto the bus platform. The conductor, grabbing his arm, said the obvious, "Youse nearly missed it, laddie!"

"Thanks for waiting!" Teddy replied.

"Och, I just like to see you wee young 'uns run."

Teddy, catching his breath, asked for a ticket to Waverley station. The conductor pulled a green ticket from his wooden rack, and having paid his 1s.9d Teddy headed for the upper floor.

Princes Street was crowded as usual, Saturday shoppers enjoying a little less austerity. Rationing had ended completely just two years ago, nearly nine years after the war ended. Colour was beginning to come back to the country. He paused and looked around him, checking for faces like his own; those that held a look of bland intent. A look of knowing disguised by normality, yet which somehow carried a vibration of the opposite.

He headed into Jenner’s Department store and idly examined the counters amongst the polished splendour and grandeur denying austerity Britain. It was not only the war, but the profligate Labour government after it that held Britain back. He looked at the ties, carefully selecting something silken, a deep indigo blue with red spots. He trailed it over his left arm, swinging round to let the light fall on it, whilst he discreetly observed the faces around him to see which if any person had followed him into the store. The assistant approached him and he agreed the purchase, the assistant carefully wrapping what was "a most distinctive and selective gentlemen's choice".

Teddy took out his cheque book and wrote out a St Martin's Bank cheque. He noticed with satisfaction the assistant's observation of his gold nib, tortoiseshell Waterman's pen.

"Thank you, sir," the assistant purred.

Teddy continued through the store, out of a side entrance and headed down St Andrews Street. He walked on to the bottom of the street, and crossed over the wide tarmac with soaring Georgian buildings either side. Many of the houses were still privately occupied but were increasingly being turned into solicitors', lawyers' and other offices for the brave new world of commerce. He noticed a black Wolseley 4/50, highly polished, chrome glinting in the sunshine. There was a man in the front drivers' seat studiously reading a broadsheet newspaper. At the far end he could make out a man dressed similarly to himself, smoking a cigarette. Clearly two goons – but whose? No matter, they were someone's. But goons and minders were not his business.

Tadek crossed into Queens Street, turned left and left again into St Davids Street, effectively completing a square. Then left again into St. Andrews Square, and reaching number 37 he turned up the whitewashed steps to the green-painted door that was finished to that glass-like polish that only the professional painter can achieve. The brass plate said *McKeowan, Guilders & Graveney, Solicitors.* He pulled on the brass bell knob and heard a distant ring, but the door opened immediately to an impeccable, white-jacketed doorman who oozed ex-military batman.

"Please come in, sir. You are?"

"Kapitan Tadek Labycz."

"You are very welcome, sir. May I take your coat?"

Another apparent staff member, dressed in dark suit, took the coat while the first attendant said, "If you could stand against the wall, sir, raise your arms above your head and spread your legs a little, I just need to 'frisk you', I believe the term is."

Tadek stood legs apart, arms raised, whilst the man ran his hands expertly over his clothes. He removed the Radom in the shoulder holster, placing it in a drawer and handing Tadek a small ticket numbered 15. When finished he said, "Up the stairs if you would, please, and straight ahead. Give me the ticket on your way out and I will give you your side-arm back. Nice piece, if I may say so."

Tadek followed his directions, climbing the wide staircase with its plush red carpet held back by polished brass rails to every step. The atmosphere was quiet. Not depressing. Not even loaded. Just quiet with time. As he walked along the corridor passing the traditional pictures of stags and purple heather he smiled at the Scottishness of the content. He could hear a murmur of voices from the other side of the door at the end of the corridor. He paused and thought whether he should go in or

knock. His chest tightened slightly with nerves. Those damned nerves. He decided to knock, and simultaneously turned the handle and entered the room.

Sunlight poured in from the high windows, silhouetting several people against the light. The room was dominated by a beautiful Regency mahogany table around which sat a group of men. Cigarette smoke rose through the sunbeams, like genies out of lamps. Tadek found the smoke caught in his throat and he coughed slightly behind his hand. A few figures rose as he came through the door.

"Over here," a voice called. "We've left a chair for you."

"Late as bloody usual!" another person said.

Another white-coated uniformed waiter, or attendant, proffered a teacup and intoned, "Darjeeling, sir? Do you take milk or lemon?"

"Lemon," Tadek replied.

The group were all men except for one woman. Ages ranged from mid-twenties to perhaps sixties. The group consisted mostly of ex-Polish servicemen, by their look. Tadek recognised one or two and nodded acknowledgment.

The Chairman called the meeting to order and began by saying, "Ladies and Gentlemen, although we have probably exchanged cards or names when taking tea, I think it would be in order to go around the table and introduce ourselves. I am General Kruszewski representing the Council of Three. General Anders' group on my right is General Staszewski, representing the President Zaleski grouping. "

I stifled a smile at these attempts at bravura. An attempt to show that we may be down and out but not ill-mannered! Even if most of those present could not afford the train and bus fare, let alone a card! Mind you, the older man had spent most of his wartime as a POW in Germany so he should be due some respect, I supposed. The Polish government in exile was now split into two distinct warring camps.

The voices droned around the table and a few extra comments were added by colleagues and friends. Some ribald, some witty and some offensive. Lines were being drawn, positions and places being established in the order of things. When it came to Kryszka, he said,

"I am a member of the Polish underground. I still consider myself to be a serving officer in the *Dwojka*, the Polish Secret Service."

The influential people present seemed to be mostly ex-military with an Intelligence bias. There were a couple of politicians each representing the old Polish parties, but no Communists.

Then it was my turn. "I'm Kapitan Tadek Labycz, an ex-member of the RAF, still also serving as an officer in the Polish underground. I'm also closely associated with the British Secret Service, now known as MI6, and the CIA."

"And not to be trusted," someone growled.

"Except by his friends," retorted Kryszka quietly.

I smiled wryly at the comments. "In other words, gentlemen, I'm a pragmatist of the world but also a member of the patriotic cult and I am in the business of learning politics."

This provoked a few returned smiles and a "Gee!" from the guy opposite, who now decided to introduce himself as, "Alan - Al for short - Bonetti, Liaison Officer with the CIA."

"On my right is Derek Hartstein of Radio Free Europe, and Robert Pullman of Voice of America, both CIA operatives. As you can guess, gentlemen, they have some other affiliations but, for the point of this meeting, their roles are as stated."

Next came the only woman there. She was small, dark and in her early forties. Whereas everyone else was formally dressed, she just wore a bottle-green twin set without jewellery of any kind. She said her name was Susan Herman. She was an Israeli and could only be a member of Mossad and probably ex-Irgun. I smiled at her and she returned mine with genuine warmth. "Hello, Hanka, long time no see!" I said.

"Hello to you too, Tadek, I'm glad we survived," she replied.

She introduced herself to the table. "I represent the interests of Israel, not Poland or the USA, but as so many of us in our service started as Poles we still cooperate with our friends here in this room, and in America and Europe. We are no special friends of any country except those who aid our survival. The Communists in Egypt and the Muslim Arabs want us destroyed so we survive with whoever aids us, and we aid them."

To say the least, it was an interesting table. General Kruszewski went on to say that our American friends were here to discuss how the exiled Polish community, or the remnants of the Polish underground, could be used in this new, cold war in this new dimension of 1956.

Al was telling the tale that the American CIA had not encouraged the Hungarians to rise. We all knew this to be a lie. It was just a demonstration to Khrushchev of what could happen. It was Khruschev's demonstration to the satellite states as to what would happen if anyone else tried it.

"They are dying in the streets today," someone said. "They are appealing for arms," another said. "Should have behaved like Poland in Poznan," someone else rejoined. "The issues were different there," another said, "irregularities in calculating wages, unrealistic indicators of production growth and efficiency, as well as very poor working conditions in the plants."

"Still, over seventy people were killed by Soviet troops in Poznan, and it was not just confined to Poznan. We would never have heard of the trouble if it were not for the International Trade Fair at the time," General Kruszewski intervened, "and Gomułka is no reforming puppy like the West portrays. He could only have been rehabilitated due to Khrushchev's secret speech in February condemning Stalin's crimes. He plays the fool in the West and uses the same tactics as Stalin, becoming a happy little Uncle Nikita rather than the now foul Joe."

It was just too much to stomach. I switched into my own world, my meditation world, my dream-time world. It was a world I had learned to live in as a child. It was where I heard everything as though a drone in the background, where only the important words sounded out like sharp notes on a violin. I listened for the pattern. I heard the tones. My eyes followed the table edge and noticed the cigarette packets. I decided I could tell the circumstances of the individual by what they smoked. How the mighty have fallen: a General with a packet of green and orange Woodbines. A one-time Major, now a grocer's assistant, also with Woodbines. An ex-pilot with Navy Cut. Another pilot, now a school lab technician, used Gold Flake. A lieutenant with Black Balkan Sobranie.

Where the hell did he get those? Clearly some sort of black market spiv, I thought.

Kryszka had his silver cigarette case emblazoned with an enamel white eagle and regimental insignia, placed ostentatiously in front of him, displaying that he had not changed. He was a die-hard. Next to him an ex-Navy man, now settled in Plymouth with new wife and baby daughter.

From my meditation I heard a voice from the corner and, for the first time, observed an angular and chiselled-faced man with jet black hair combed straight back and brilliantined close to his head. He was dressed as a priest and he spoke to the American Al.

"In answer to your question as to whether Poland will help the Americans, I can only say that they will help provided that the Americans assist in a wider context on behalf of traditional values. Poland

can play a central role in Europe, but the conflict, the cold war, is on a wider scale for the battle for hearts and minds. Communism is the anti-Christ and needs to be stopped." He spoke English with an educated but Mediterranean accent.

I heard myself say, "So the Church speaks for Poland, Father, does it?"

The Monseigneur, placing fingers together like a tent, looked at me with animosity, saying, "My son, it is the duty of the Church to direct its own, and Poland, like Ireland, is a jewel in the crown of Our Lady. Poland has always been in the front of the Christian fight and will continue to be so."

I disliked this type of Catholic so I could not resist the riposte of, "I see you have a poor grasp of Polish history, Monsigneur. We Poles, although admittedly the majority are nominally Catholic - I must add based fervently on our attachment to our matriarchal past pagan beliefs - have never indulged in your religious wars against heretics except to save your necks from Turks and Tartars.

“Certainly not in the persecution of alternative believers, which is why we welcomed the Jews. True, we have not always had good relations with our Jewish Poles and, as a Canadian Pole, I was exceptionally surprised at the Holy Father's Concordat with Hitler, which allowed for the extermination of the inconvenient Jews as well as the enslavement of the sub-human Slavs including many good Catholic priests. Did the Holy See's policy not foresee the destruction of Poland? I do not see it in a position now to speak for Poland."

There was an uncomfortable silence around the table. Al offered, "We ain't got no real problem with Catholics. In fact, we have a big Irish community."

Still in spiky mode I came back at him with, "Are you suggesting that all the Irish are Catholic, then? Or am I mistaken in thinking that there is a Church of Ireland and a large Protestant community?"

At which point Kryszka, who had managed to sink far enough in his chair to reach me under the table with his boot, kicked me hard and added for the table's benefit, "I must apologise for my friend's caustic remarks but he is somewhat of a historian."

The tension I had created eased and a few laughs followed.

The Monseigneur quietly and coolly added, "We must remember, my son, the Church has power and influence…"

"And pots of gold," I interjected.

A few of the Polish military men smiled.

He continued, ignoring my quip. "The Vatican has one of the best intelligence services in the world and, between us all here, that is between Catholics, Poles, Jews and Israelis, we should be able to know more and do more than any other groups to aid our American, and indeed British friends, to fight Communism."

There was a pause, and General Kruszewski invited Al to explain fully the reason for this meeting. The meeting was clearly observed by the British goons, but they were also clearly excluded, unless someone in the room was a stool pigeon, or a microphone had been hidden somewhere.

The last man at the side of the table spoke, introducing himself. He was in his late fifties. He was well-dressed with grizzled grey hair. He had a cigarette lighter which he was twisting and tumbling between his fingers. I watched the cigarette lighter turn over and over.

"I am known as Witek." The smoke hovered just above our heads, curling from the cigarettes. Tap, tap, tap, the cigarette lighter turned and, in my head, it hollowed and echoed, taking me to another table where the smoke had drifted as men talked.

Tap, tap, tap, tap…. A real place far, far from here, away from such games as these.

I remembered it all so well. I saw again Witek, as he turned the lighter over and over in his large, coarse hands. They were muddy and raw from the cold, contrasting against the polished surface of the lighter catching the sunlight from the window. He tapped it on the table and began flicking it on and off, the wick failing to catch from the sparks. He was a big man, dressed in an old army greatcoat under which lay an assortment of clothing to keep out the cold. His face had that round, rugged look that would fit anywhere from Mongolia to the Baltic. Weather-beaten, creased. With blue-grey eyes that matched the steel of the lighter. He was thinking and struggling. Struggling to come to terms with the failure of everything around him and to come to terms with the bitterness that disillusionment brings. Struggling with what we had said.