

*If you remember the fallen in the struggle for freedom, it means that you've loved the heritage of liberty and that freedom will come.*

Marek Chodakiewicz

### **Honor of the City, Honor of the Nation**

“*Show your own history in the context of other nations,*” said Professor Norman Davies. It is not only the scale of the suffering, the enormity of the sacrifices, the most important is to draw conclusions, evaluate the consequences of certain actions. The point is to put the events in the context of the most important events of the time.

Regaining independence after 123 years of partitions gave Poland a chance to become once again the Poland that it once was: a large beautiful country, with a beautiful tradition, history, a strong economy. The interwar period was a period of reconstruction of the country, a country that after the partitions was again reborn as a great European country. The assault in September 1939 by Nazi Germany together with the Red Army blighted these opportunities for the next fifty years.

This invasion initiated a terrifying chapter in the history of humanity, destruction, cruelty and barbarism, on a scale never before experienced.

Five years of nightmarish occupation, deportations, executions, concentration camps, left Varsovians no alternative. The Uprising was a retaliation for the crimes committed by the hated occupiers, it became a matter of honor, the honor of the city, the honor of the nation. "Dignity and humanity were what we fought for," Marek Edelman said about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Warsaw Uprising is the only case in the history of the World War II of a twice-attempted battle of a city for freedom, dignity and humanity. It displayed the heroism, patriotism and dedication of that generation of Poles.

The insurgent Warsaw became a kind of second front on the Eastern front. On July 27, the Germans gave the order for one hundred thousand inhabitants of Warsaw to begin construction of fortifications. Earlier, Radio Moscow urged Warsaw residents to commence the uprising. A dilemma. The failure to fulfill German orders meant the death penalty for residents, the ruin of the city. Failure to join the uprising, which Stalin called for, would be a betrayal of the Allies, like calling the Varsovians fascists, an opportunity for revenge and the total destruction of the city.

The Warsaw Uprising should be shown to the whole world in the context of the uprisings in Paris and Prague. The uprising in Paris broke out on August 19<sup>th</sup>, the day the insurgents captured the PASTA building, while the Germans were considering surrender. The Uprising broke out in Paris without the consent of the Allies.

The goal was to free the city with the hands of its residents. Hitler ordered the total destruction of Paris. General Eisenhower who after landing in Normandy wanted to come to Berlin via Belgium, had given the order to help the insurgents. And thanks to that, the uprising in Paris ended in victory after just a week of fighting.

Three days before the end of the war, an uprising broke out in Prague. Insurgents captured German weapons depots, thirty thousand rifles and cut off the German four hundred thousand man army retreat to the American sector. The desperate Germans, by all means did not want to fall into the hands of the Russians. The slaughter of the inhabitants and ruins of the city were prevented by the Russians, who saw the Allies approaching from the west to Prague, and liberated the city themselves.

Unfortunately, the insurgents in Warsaw waited in vain for nine weeks for help from the Allies. And this is the failure, the failure of the coalition. And they are to blame for the tragedy of civilians and insurgents in Warsaw. The allies should have come to Warsaw with aid, as they did in Paris or Prague.

The Warsaw Uprising was the largest military operation undertaken by a civil resistance movement in Europe during World War II. Was this sacrifice necessary? On the one hand, death, destruction, on the other hand a heroic struggle for freedom. The heritage of the Uprising became for the next generations living under Communist occupation a symbol of the struggle for independence. **It was a matter of honor, the honor of the city and it should be remembered as such with devotion and admiration.**

Eugene Starky