

Announcer: Please welcome your moderator John Lenczowski, Marek Chodakiewicz, Msgr. Slawomir Oder, and Minister Piotr Naimski.

Dr. Lenczowski: Good morning once again, ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to introduce to you my colleague at the Institute of World Politics, Dr. Marek Chodakiewicz, who in my estimation is one of the most productive scholars-

Dr.Chodakiewicz: Don't believe him! We always have a love fest. I love him and he's a lord and master. So, yeah.

Dr. Lenczowski: Marek is one of the most productive scholars on the whole subject of Central and Eastern European history and the history of Western civilization. Then, of course, I'm delighted to introduce Msgr. Slawomir Oder, who has been involved as the principal postulator for the case of the canonization of Pope John Paul II, the saint. Then, again, we're delighted to have Min. Naimski with us. This panel is entitled "Be not afraid" and it addresses the whole question of how the peoples of the Soviet Empire of Poland, of East-Central Europe, and the inner empire—even within the Soviet Union—managed to gain their courage in the face of the repressive atmosphere of that type of a political system.

I'd just like to begin by observing that the communist governments were all illegitimate governments. None of them ruled with the consent of the governed. They all seized power by conspiracy, force, ruthlessness, deception, and incremental seizure of power and the progressive destruction of the traditional institutions of society. The subversion of those institutions by all sorts of means, not the least of which was the promotion of sexual libertinism in order to break down the family — in order to break down the stability of social relationships—and of course, once they seized power, there was the re-imposition of sexual puritanism in order to ensure stability of society.

The central fact of political life in this type of a political system was the regime's fear of its own people. That fear — the degree to which the regime feared the people — could be measured by the size and the scope of the internal security system of the state. Which included not only the pervasive use of informants in East Germany—we do know the statistics: a full 25% of the East German population had been forced or co-opted into becoming secret informants to the secret police (God knows what that percentage was in Poland or the Soviet Union), but it was a pervasive thing.

Then, of course, there are the many punishments for those who did not conform with the party line. There was the complete control of the economy, of job placement, of where you could reside. Inside the Soviet Union itself, you couldn't travel easily from virtually from one town to another without having about five different documents in order, an internal passport, your trade union card, your draft card, a residency card, and these other types of things, and the complete control of—the complete state monopoly of—communications and information, and not to mention control of education, entertainment, all publishing, the jamming of foreign broadcasts, the hermetic sealing of the

borders, and so on. So, fear— and so you had the regime fearing the people, and you had the people fearing the regime.

So, how is this vicious cycle broken? And I would like first to begin just to ask each of the participants here on the panel if they could share some of their reflections of how people could get the courage to go and demonstrate. In almost all of these countries if you went out into the streets to demonstrate, you would be arrested and you'd be sent off. In the Soviet Union, we'd be sent to the Gulag. In Poland it might not have been so severe, but it certainly could have been severe depending upon how important the regime thought you were to the internal security threat that it faced. Perhaps, Marek, would you like to begin?

Dr.Chodakiewicz:

I was taught three main things at home. Number one: be brave — audacity. Number two: be free— that's liberty. Number three: stay true to your homeland, patriotism, and nationalism.

Suddenly, there arrived a figure of super-human proportions who reigned publicly— and that was John Paul II. He said, "Fear not!" ("nie lekajcie sie"). He also said, "Jesus is the truth and the truth shall set you free." Hence, Christianity means liberty. You are liberated. And then the pope never tired of repeating that he's the son of Poland. That's what shaped and molded him. He was not ashamed of sovereignty. He invoked the bible— the Old Testament— where it plainly says that at first there were tribes and sovereign nations— not the EU or the Soviet Union!

That was extremely important and then, lo and behold, another giant showed up on my horizon and I experienced him first-hand in America since 1982 (before I admired him from afar), and he would say things like, "It's morning again in America." That means he dared to hope for the best following the debacle in Vietnam, stagflation, all that pessimism. He brought a smile back to our faces. Secondly, he spoke —with jokes— about the "Evil Empire"— that was fabulous! Good and evil. And lastly, he admonished us to remember that freedom will only last one generation if the kids stop giving a damn about it. This was a powerful wave of reinforcement for what I learned at home. Now, this is important to remember that, when one grew up under totalitarianism, none of this was taken for granted. In fact, almost everybody was scared. Almost everybody refused to talk to the grandkids or kids and convey the message of freedom and the message of patriotism, the message of bravery and the truth.

People, normal people, were scared. When I was a kid, I was surprised. My grandmother taught me that we were right and everybody else was the freak. When in fact the opposite was the truth. Fear was all pervasive and permanent. Then, in June 1979, when I was in high school, my teacher said —oh, in May 1979— my teacher said, "Don't go to welcome this priest from Rome that's coming. There is going to be a massacre! People will stampede and kill each

other like in Mexico!" And I raised my hand and I said, "this is communist propaganda." I know that because one of Piotr Naimski's friends stole a communist propaganda memo and disseminated it within the dissident circles, which included my father. So, we discussed it at home openly and I thought I'd inform my teacher in case if she didn't know. Yes, I was 17— boys are stupid. Nothing bad had happened to me personally. I'm the only male member in my family not yet to have died on the battlefield or to have been in a camp or in jail, except to visit my father. So, I was not scared, but most people were.

However, we all cut school to see the pope and we went to the old town first to see Papa mrobiel, his vehicle, his convoy, and I looked around: there were people looking at each other and smiling! You know the Brezhnev scowl? That was the default in communist countries because there was nothing to be happy about. Unless you scored that roll of toilet paper—but that only would put a brief smile in your face. There, in the old town and at the square, people were smiling. I thought I was back in the West. Not only that, people were not pushing, they were extremely well-mannered and self-policing. This was just a fabulous experience for what was only limited to a handful of crazy souls. The pope managed to project onto virtually the entire nation. Unbelievable.

It didn't last forever. For instance, stupid me, I returned to Poland in 1980. I turned 18 in England in July. There were strikes in Poland in August 1980, so I thought there would be an end to the communist uprising and we'd fight the Soviets— boys are stupid, again —and then, it was boring because Solidarity mostly consisted of talking about things that my grandmothers had taught me about before! Why would I have to repeat that all the time? This is for the first time that, because of the spirit of freedom, people in Poland could speak openly. Then martial law was imposed.

In February 1982, I was leafleting on a bus in between bus stops. People were scared and none of them would take my leaflet from me— anti-communist leaflets. So, I scorned them because I was stupid. I didn't realize that they thought I was a secret police provocateur. This is what communism does to you. However, the driver of the bus not only accepted a couple of leaflets, but he also safely dropped me off before any scheduled stop so that nothing would happen to me. That means the seed had been planted, and people like the bus driver (and others) were the backbone of Solidarity and independent student's union underground. Then, Ronald Reagan got me out of Poland and I heard the same message in a free country. I was frankly surprised that me, in college in California (I shuffled between Berkley and Stanford), and I didn't like people burning the American flag. There were a few other students who didn't, but they didn't say anything! I said to them, "Dudes, fear not. What the heck is your problem?" They are the freaks, the ones burning the flag, not us. Respect is a must for the country. And so, it went on. Anyway, that's a short version.

Dr. Lenczowski:

Gentlemen. May I ask your reflections on-

Msgr. Oder:

If I may, I would like to recall my personal experience that I was living in that place. I was 18 when the pope was elected. So, I was in the moment of my life choices. I was thinking about the seminary. Well, Marek said about the atmosphere of fear that we were living before the election of Pope John Paul II, and I can say that it was true— it was this atmosphere of being scared or afraid. It was before the famous words of John Paul II "Be not afraid!" and I was living in a moment of scare and I was afraid when he was elected because the enthusiasm that we were weaving in Poland at that moment was so great that I was afraid to challenge all my life, and respond to Christ for my vocation and to become a priest. So, I decided not to enter the seminary after the election of John Paul II, but to enter a university and just to make clear with my ideas.

I think that while it is something that probably can be read also in the general way because in the moment of the election of John Paul II, I think in the beginning, when we were growing up in the fear and "no hope" atmosphere—we were afraid to have hope. Because unexpectedly, the hope opened behind us. And it was something unexpected: the hope. Well, John Paul II is called the "Witness to Hope" and I think it is really the true name of him and his pontificate. I remember very well the moment when the pope was arriving to Poland for the first time in 1979. The symbol of this moment of the arrival was the bells of the churches.

It was in old Poland and the moment when the pope was arriving, all bells in the church were belling, yes? So, it was something beautiful. The most beautiful moment for me personally, was just the moment that the mass was celebrated, and we saw this part of the homily of John Paul II in the Victory Square in Warsaw when he invoked the Holy Spirit for us. It was the moment of charisma for Poland. But I think that in this moment, staying there, we could realize something that was really against the intentions of the regime. We could realize that we were a lot. There was a crowd. United by the same ideas, united by the same faith, and from this moment: hope. It was the moment really when you could find and feel the moment [the new people were born]. Of a new society. The hope entered in our hearts and our houses. I think that this was the moment of the beginning of the true change in Poland.

Well, John Paul II was a free man. He lived in liberty and he said, "What is the secret of liberty?" He said that a man who lives under the eyes of God is a free man. I have nothing to [fear]. The mass in Victory Square— this moment invoked the Holy Spirit— was the moment in which we could hear that we were living under the eyes of God. The moment of the hope and the [birth] of liberty.

Dr. Lenczowski:

This is wonderful. I just wanted to reflect on the significance of what you've just said here. One of the key elements of totalitarian government is to create the atomization of society: where you separate all people, from every individual, from the rest of society so that the individual stands alone against the all-powerful state. This is done, of course, by creating this pervasive atmosphere of fear and mistrust, where nobody can trust anybody else (such as you were commenting, Marek when the people couldn't trust you thinking you were a

provocateur with your leaflets) and, of course, there were all sorts of maneuvers that the secret police did along these lines. So, when people are isolated this way, it brings them into a psychological state of futile resignation, where the regime is basically telling you resistance to us is futile. So, the strategic challenge is to get people to escape somehow this psychological state of despair. You are saying effectively that when the pope was there, he gave you a message of hope, and when you saw that you were all in the big crowd— and that there is more of us than there is of them— that this somehow snapped this period of atomization and mass-fear. It was really a moment that this happened. Could you see it creeping, could you see this thing happening incrementally or did it somehow snap?

Min. Naimski:

I completely agree. You know, the major question was of losing hope. Being hopeless and I completely agree with Father. He brought hope again. There were many impossibilities we had at that time. So, “impossible” happened to be the reality after his election— because of his election. Nobody expected it in Poland —and all over the world— that something like that could happen, and it happened. So, once his election happened, Poland also could be free and could be a free country. You see, there were a number of us—not a great number of us— before he came to Poland, and I probably agree with Marek being stupid enough not to be afraid or being too young to be afraid. I can tell you, when we started (I mean me and my friends), we started this opposition to the communist regime in Poland in early '70's. Or when we organized this committee in support of workers after the riots in '76. We are persuaded by our parents and also grandparents who still remembered the experience of the Second World War and after the war and the '56 riots in Poland and in '70 — you know, it could be really futile and we shouldn't do what we wanted to start because we would be exiled or jailed or killed, and they were afraid— scared — about losing next young generation of Poles.

So, I remember that when I was 20-something years old, I was approaching those heroes from Second World War because they were still alive— we knew them, and I wanted them to persuade them to join us, and many of them were quite reluctant to do it because they were scared about us. Some of them did, and once this visit happened, all of that really changed and this is why Solidarity was able to rise in three months, as I mentioned before. It took really three months— late August, September, October, and half of November— to have this organization alive. Which was something really, once again— miraculous.

Alright, let me raise another point. You know his visit (John Paul II visit) gave us or brought back the sense of being part of the free world. Being part of something wider and being part of, of course, the Catholic Church, but also being part of the West. This is what is really important. At that time, the Cold War was going on and it was the West and the communists. We felt ourselves being part of the West, which was really important; and one point more: you know, I can imagine John Paul II saying, "Be not afraid." He could address communists' operatives as well. Be not afraid of your nation. I think you know that— knowing his pope's other addresses and what he was saying —you know,

in many times, I think that he treated all of his interlocutors the same way as human beings. So not be afraid.

Dr. Lenczowski: It's wonderful. I would like to ask about one thing because we're talking here about overcoming fear and gaining courage. In the context of the complete sort of moral Chernobyl, in a way, that the communist world was subjected to. I would like to ask your reflections about the moral psychological condition of the people, in light of Vaclav Havel's observation, that most people living inside the communist world had been forced in —one way or another— to compromise. And had been forced by the regime to go along with the party line in one way or another.

If you went to work in your office or your factory (and particularly more so in the Soviet Union), but the propagandist agitator would show up once a week to give you the latest party line and would say, "Oh, well. Our government has decided now to render fraternal assistance to our brothers in Afghanistan in order to fight Chinese and American interventionism. How many of you here agree with this policy and support the policy?" And, of course, everyone has to raise their hand, and anyone who doesn't raise their hand —well, their daughter won't get into the university, their heat quota may be lowered for the winter, or some other kind of punishment. So, once you raise your hand, now you're all of a sudden a moral accomplice to the policy, and this has an incredibly morally corroding effect upon your spirit and because now you've become an accessory to the whole business— and maybe you were even forced to be an informant against your will. So, in light of this type of psychology, where so many people had to become morally compromised in order to sacrifice perhaps their own integrity for the sake of their children, let's say, how do you overcome this? How do you escape this? What is the psychological/moral mechanism that occurred here because something happened?

Dr.Chodakiewicz: What I saw in the adult world in my family, was belief in free will. Free will dictates that you don't have to become a swine. They won't promote you, they'll cut your heat or lower your meat quota, and you don't have to be a swine. Yes, I'm an absolutist. I will stop. Let your communications be "nay,nay" or "yea,yea", whether it as Poland—or now, the United States, where we need it because of the wave of political correctness. At the same time, I'm a historian, so I study accommodation. Accommodation is the rule among all human beings, not only captive people, but we all agree. I remember Ambassador Bob Riley wrote a book, *Closing of the Muslim Mind* and he wrote another one, *Making Gay Okay*. Some people would say, "Oh my goodness! You're so accomplished. Why did you have to write about such 'controversial topics'?" Well, that's because hardly anybody else does (except Paul Kengor maybe). It's a moral choice that you speak on topics that the Glitterati tried to blackmail you to be silent about. And there was no difference when I observed the adults who lived around me. My parents, my grandmothers, they made choices and they lived in crap. They lived abysmal lives and they could have lived much better. All they had to do was lie, cheat, steal, and join the communist party. They never surrendered, and they paid enormous prices.

My grandmother, who had been a veteran of the home army, who survived the Gestapo, the NKVD Soviet secret police, and the Polish communist secret police, would not join the official communist-run veterans' organization. Which means she had no privileges at the hospital, she had to pay full price for everything. Not only health care, but also the state-run phone company wouldn't give her a break on her bill and we were all impoverished because of World War II and its aftermath. Those were moral choices and I'm very proud of my family. Now, I understand that we were freaks because most people, even some of her commanding officers, would say well, don't worry. Sign some documents. You don't have to be a communist— but, if you belong to this organization your life will be easier. And by the way, keep quiet.

Dr. Lenczowski: That's right. Father?

Msgr. Oder: Well, I think that the problem you mentioned of course existed, but it is impossible to say that the majority of society collaborated or make some choices, and again the morality, as Marek said ... accommodated-

Dr.Chodakiewicz: Accommodated is not the same as collaboration. There's resistance. There's accommodation, and there's collaboration: willing collusion with evil. Very few did that. Most simply wanted to survive.

Msgr. Oder: Yes, just survive, but it was not simply [survival]. I think that in the time, and I remember it very perfectly from my experience, we had at least two spheres in which the liberty existed. It means the church. In the church, we, all the time, were free and it was possible to say— also paying personally— as we remember, for example, Father Papauczko, he paid with his life. But it was possible to say the truth— we felt free— it was possible because of the presence of such bishops, such fighters like Cardinal Vicienski, like Karol Wojtyla. So, it was one sphere of the liberty and another one, of course it was up to the personal situation, but it was family.

The family, yes, the memory of the freedom, the memory and the concrete situation of moral truths in our choices and our memory. I remember, of course, in the school at the time I was a student and I was studying the history, the history was not something ... the history, literature, it was the subject that was discussed and was possible to present it in different ways, and I remember after lessons at school, I was returning to home and my father or grandfather asked me, "What was school about?" And I said, for example, about World War II: "Well, and what the teacher said? Well, he said this, but you must remember that it was this way."

So, we have, I remember, this moment just like a schizophrenic situation. We lived in parallel worlds. It was the official world and was normal family world. It was translated and also in our common language. At the time, in Poland, we used to say "they" and "we" when we were talking about the state of the government, they were, "they were" and "we" in other situations. Really,

communism and the communist state was felt by the society like something strange.

Dr.Chodakiewicz: Alien.

Msgr. Oder: Yes, it was not a part of our legacy, of our way of our life. It was something strange, momentary. Well, this moment would be long or short, but it was something that doesn't make part of our life. So, I think there's two situations: the church and the family were the memory of their freedom, and the truth and morality. It is something that helped us to live.

Dr.Chodakiewicz: And private agriculture.

Msgr. Oder: Of course.

Dr.Chodakiewicz: The farmers illegally fed the cities.

Msgr. Oder: Of course, yes, that's true.

Dr.Chodakiewicz: Yes, that's what made Poland different: private property.

Min. Naimski: What Father and Marek described, you know, it was a real fact of kind of a double reality. Living in double reality, which wasn't easy, and it depended on individual character. Where was the border between those realities? But, you see, the border between collaboration and the rest, of course, existed. Asking this question, John, you touched the problem of de-communization in post-communist countries and revealing of secret informants and so on and so on. And those who were against such moves, which I personally I thought that they were necessary, they argued against it saying, "Alright, you know everybody has been involved and we are all responsible."

So, what's the reason to go to the past? Let's think about the future. There is no future without past. And without responsibility for the past. So, I believe that, I really think, that this moral— I mean moral border between those who collaborated, not necessarily being secret informant— but, for example, simply being communist operatives. People like that, so they were responsible, and we should think about their responsibility. The problem is sometimes deeper because you see it touches (Marek touched this side of the issue), it touches these days political correctness. Because today people are very often afraid to stand and say what they think about certain issues. They are afraid of their colleagues, they are afraid of their superiors. There is no communist, there is no police regime, but there is something which is imposed upon us. This is what I try to touch in my speech, you know, one hour ago.

Dr. Lenczowski: Yes. Political correctness is really an outgrowth of the Leninist doctrine of adopting the correct ideology and maintaining conformity with it. It was the vehicle of thought control and speech control, which would then be the vehicle

to ensure party discipline and the conformity with the party line so that in the first case, the minority could seize power over the majority and then later that same minority could rule.

Dr.Chodakiewicz: In fact, Lenin coined the term.

Dr. Lenczowski: Excuse me?

Dr.Chodakiewicz: Lenin coined the term "political correctness." "It's not politically correct, comrades, follow me!"

Dr. Lenczowski: I would just like to ask one question, that is, that could be, and may in some respects not be related to all of this, but I would like to have, particular Msgr.'s reflections, of why Pope John Paul II was made a saint.

Msgr. Oder: It is very hard to explain in a few minutes-

Min. Naimski: But you know it's really necessary, you know, you should-

Dr.Chodakiewicz: It's very simple. He made impossible things possible. That's called a miracle.

Msgr. Oder: Well, no, the truth is the church has a very, very hard and rigid rules regarding the process of sainthood. I've heard the process of St. John Paul II was working and there was a process about the virtues— heroic virtues of his life— and I can say that he really lived all his life making the choices that were very hard— sometimes impossible, humanly impossible—but it was possible because he was just a man of God. I think that the secret of St. John Paul II was just that he was a man of God. It means that he lived his dialogue, the presence of God in his life. He was open to the meta-historical dimension. And I think that while the message that he gave us was just this one: to not limit our life to the temporary, historical, social, political and [inaudible 00:48:31], but it is necessary to open our life just to the presence of somebody and something else. It is possible in this way to change what is humanly impossible. John Paul II was a man of faith, was a man of truth, was a man of hope; but essentially, he was a man of God. So, that is why he is saint.

Dr. Lenczowski: Terrific. Thank you very much Msgr., gentlemen, thank you for your wonderful contributions.

Dr.Chodakiewicz: Thank you, John.