

NAVIGATORS CAN

brought me love too, couldn't ask for any greater possible joy in being fully alive. I didn't know what the outcome would be for myself and Irene, but when you have a feeling deep inside that something's right, it always is.

The most important truth I learned was that even if you don't know what the result of something will be, if the "something" gives you a good feeling inside as if pushing you forward, that is the voice of your "compass" saying "go for it". That's the moment to make a vision of the positive result you want. Use that vision as your carrot to dangle in front of your eyes. Keep following it no matter what, and the positive result will happen.

The greatest challenge of life is to be fully alive in every moment, no matter what is happening. Life has taught me that no matter how horrible or happy a situation, the situation has no power to decide how I'm going to feel about it. I alone have that power.

I suspect a magic ingredient was thrown in, not in what they gave us, but how. With passionate, full love. There is no greater healer.

I knew nothing of the complex machinations of evil that mastermind war and death. No power in the universe can ever make me understand what possible joy, benefit or pleasure one person can get from the torment, agony, suffering, violation and massacre of another.

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With a crack of the whip
the horses trotted
patiently
like the earth dark and damp.
Dust
hung like grey fog above the road
the wind smelled sweet
carrying the barking of village dogs
across the meadows.
From beyond a green hedge
the river's murmuring
announced
the first breath of a new day.

“July”

Though beautiful spring in skies around
with bloody hue will dawn awake
steel sea cut by boom of mines
trembling reflexes will subdue
bombs will sound for the hundredth time
sea will quake across its surface
earth will start to spit grenades
once again, the song is WAR.

“War”

At midday
when the wind has combed the rushes
and the clouds hang poised
sunlight like fingers
caresses the grain
which swoons in the fragrance
of cornflowers

Ripened ears of corn
Smell sweet
and next to them
heaven's shawl
tassles of weeping willows
spills onto the ground

Grain
lulled by the silence
is overwhelmed by birds' song
the wind wraps itself around the scent

Life
matures
not in dreams
but in battle...

“In the Field”

FLIGHT-PATH 2

MASTERING FEAR

Don't think things got easy for me from that point. They got worse. The worse things got, the more scared I got. The more scared I got, the deeper down I had to dig for what I was *really* made of in order to handle it. How much deeper could this process go? How many more undiscovered strengths did I possess to rise up and smite each new wave of fear? I was utterly amazed, even shocked to discover that no matter how impossible things looked, there was *always a way out*. Unbelievable, but absolutely true. In the darkest hour, when I reached the bottom of my endurance, thinking no human being could collapse farther, I *did*, right through the bottom and thought that would be that. My tombstone, if they could find it, would read "He did his best, but his best failed him". My great terror was that I would try everything, yet fail. Looking *behind* that for something positive, what flashed across my mind was the greater terror of not doing anything at all.

I reminded myself that I was doing not just for me, but for other people I might never meet in ways I might never know. If even one life was lost because of something I did *not* do, that would be one life too many. How slight a shift of realization that was. Yet how powerful a motivator. It helped me surge forward with renewed strength of purpose. In fact it kept me going through the rest of the war. It is a truth which like a constant companion, has been the magical anchor in every endeavour I have pursued in my life ever since.

In Poland the Germans didn't leave one place unoccupied. Even in little Kielce they were wall to wall. One day an execution squad came to round up a group of people on the street, about a dozen, stood them in front of St. Wojciech's Church, and shot them. I could easily have been one of them. I happened to be right there, only a few metres away. The thing was, these atrocities were so unpredictable and happened so fast, only a miracle could save you. Your red-alert button had to be on 24 hours. Otherwise, you'd be toast.

A familiar old alleyway saved me. The moment I discerned what was up, I instinctively lurched backwards, away from the

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swarming in the square. Carefully but deliberately I kept moving retrograde, a step at a time. The soldiers were so busy hurding everyone into their snare, they failed to notice my crab-style retreat into an alleyway. I couldn't get there fast enough, yet had to move gracefully enough not to attract attention. My heart was pounding in panic but my instinct for self-preservation was stronger and wiser. The last sounds I heard, were men, women and children screaming, then sharp crackling gunfire. I turned and fled from the evil that had instantly extinguished those beautiful lives.

When I re-directed my military career toward being part of the underground, my fear was great but my excitement was greater. The delicious prospect of actually forming and running a covert operation was tantalizing. It caused me to have to dare. More important, daring to live the way I wanted converted all my fear energy into wonderful fuel for the work. Bit by bit, the fear was replaced with a sense of purpose. Then purpose became elation as we scored success after success. Life's terror was teaching me how to live the life I dared right in the middle of all the terror around me. Intensely immersed in this secret under-cover work, we had to watch our backs constantly, but it never occurred to give up. We worked carefully, but the German Gestapo were no fools. In the Spring of '41 suspecting my activities, one of their units arrested me.

They hauled me off to their interrogation centre in the old district courthouse which by that time, like all major buildings was thickly infested by German officials of varying ranks. Then began an eight- to ten-hour drill of gruelling questions. While my mouth was talking, my mind was planning only one thing: escape. Luckily I knew the old building better than they did. It's where my father had worked many years as District Court Judge, and I had visited him often. So the familiar old place was my territory, not theirs.

After so many hours, there's no question you need a toilet. They couldn't deny me. Yanked out of my chair by two armed soldiers, was shoved toward and pushed into the small washroom. Quickly I locked the door. After making the usual expected noises, I turned the water on full blast, climbed onto the toilet seat, opened the window just above and out I flew. In those days I was slim enough to fit. Also I knew a roof was right there, not some dangerous plunge that would have killed me for sure. Soon came shouts and a loud crash as my "guards" realized I had bolted and were bashing down the bathroom door. Tense but agile, I clung like a cat to the old

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tiles. Where was the escape route? I was in a world of rooftops. When you've got rooftops, you have to be Dick Van Dyke in Mary Poppins.

By this time shouts, thudding boots and gunshots exploded from below. The Gestapo were down on the street firing up at the rooftops. I kept right on moving, jumping like a jackrabbit from roof to roof. Somehow so weirdly sure I'd be safe, I recall making an insane joke of it all, wondering what would suddenly possess a bunch of soldiers to go start blowing holes in a bunch of rooftops. Having a shooting-good time of it all, chaps? Ridiculous. How undignified of them. And how shocked to think that in that most dangerous situation, I should be making jokes.

When at last I stopped, I was far away out of sight. The clatter and confusion of the streets below were mere echoes, barely audible. No way they'd catch me now. I looked down and spotted an obscure, deserted alleyway. I slid down onto solid ground. Seem safe enough. But I kept on going right out of town. Some time later it occurred to me through the haze that that was the second time a plain old alleyway had served to save me from the jaws of death. I allowed myself to savour again those memories with my father. "Thanks, Dad", I murmured, choking back floods of emotion.

Those near misses were enough to make anyone quit the whole mess for good. But I was stubborn. Contrary to rational behaviour, I went the other way. If luck had brought me this far, I had to "push it" even farther. By now I should have been dead three times. The first fear in that open field was the worst. I had no way out, was completely powerless to help myself. Perfect victim. The fear was real, deadly, immobilizing. A miracle had to happen and did. The second fear in the town square execution was sudden but tested my ability to save myself. I passed that test. When fear struck a third time at the hands of the Gestapo, the next rung on my ladder of mastering fear summoned my inner James Bond. He rose admirably to the surface and transported me to safety. I even cracked a Bond-type joke, feeling its flush of victory surge through my veins for having allowed myself a "cracked" moment.

If the Gestapo had wanted to scare me off, they failed. I continued my conspiracy work even more aggressively with the co-operation of a Lieutenant in the Army, but from another location at Kotlice, an estate just north of Kielce which served as admin headquarters. We had a primitive but

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working landing strip nearby for Allied Forces air-drops of arms and ammunition. These were intended for partisan sniper groups, but we intercepted and funnelled everything to the Polish Home Army.

Despite the spectres of fear at every fork in the road, I made sure to deliberately create and experience some forks of my own. I found that in the midst of fear, I used its energy to feed my confidence and empower and motivate myself. Not to lose my focus on what life really was all about, the same year that I survived Nazi interrogators, I got engaged. It was April lucky 13, of course. June 13 I was advanced to Lieutenant. I even continued law studies at Poland's famous old Jagiellonian University in Kraków which secretly operated underground throughout the war years in direct defiance of Nazi edicts. Get caught, and it's off to Auschwitz with you. You couldn't pass "Go" or collect \$200; you went straight to Auschwitz.

With practice and persistence, it was getting easier and easier to master all my fears. I wanted to live without having to fear anything ever again. When you want something in life, events have a way of challenging you. When you face the challenge head-on and master it, the reward is you get what you want and more because it becomes a part of who and what you are. You can harness the energy of fear to foil fear itself.

When January '45 arrived, so did the Russians. I had married my wife Irene a year earlier, July 15 '44. I had wanted the 13th, but no one could stand any more 13s, so I relented and we chose 15. We settled into the estate at Kotlice surrounded by German-planted landmines in all directions to inhibit the passage of Russian tanks. Hang the tanks – I was worried about myself and Irene having to walk through that fear-mine every day! How to remove them? The "Russian Army" solution was to use their own Russian convicts slated for execution. If they could lead the way for tanks to safely navigate the terrain without themselves being blown up, they were granted their lives.

Liquor was both friend and foe. The Germans had just pulled out when the alcohol-drugged Russians swaggered in. Their stupor helped ease their own battle-pain, but in turn inflicted it on others, perpetrating the usual senseless atrocities against women and the otherwise-vulnerable. Whatever the Germans did not do, the Russians moved in and did the rest. Though guards were posted around our home, they were nonetheless Russian and there only because a Russian General had decided to set up headquarters in our manor.

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So yes, our early married life was steeped in many sleepless nights and anxious days not knowing how well or how long we could count on being truly “guarded”. Yet, when I had to bribe a Russian officer one day to drive us into Kielce, I was thankful that all it took was a pack of cigarettes and two litres of 96%-proof alcohol.

By February 12 – almost a 13 – 1945, I made Captain of the Polish Armed (Underground) Forces. I thought back. Major waves of fear had swept through six years of my life, yet alive I was still, and still standing, somehow. But for how long? What lay next?

The worse things got, the more scared I got. The more scared I got, the deeper down I had to dig for what I was *really* made of in order to handle it. Each time, I was utterly amazed, even shocked to discover that no matter how impossible things looked, there was *always a way out*.

My great terror was that I would try everything, yet fail. Looking *behind* that for something positive, what flashed across my mind was the greater terror of not doing anything at all.

More important, daring to live the way I wanted converted all my fear energy into wonderful fuel for the work. Bit by bit, the fear was replaced with a sense of purpose. Then purpose became elation as we scored success after success. Life's terror was teaching me how to live the life I dared right in the middle of all the terror around me.

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The nation chokes in the steel claws of German tanks
divisions fall in battle mid the boom of cannons
beating incessantly against land and air.
From shapeless ruins smoke rises like the necks of men
condemned
crowds of refugees stockstill in terror.
Hatred slithers across the earth, fires seep
nipping at houses, animals, people.
Mid the stench of charred bodies the wounded ruckle –
everywhere you look; flames and ashes
the roar of cannons increases while from enemy planes
machine-gun fire rains down on huts beset with fear
on people working the fields
on crowds fleeing along the roadway. A boneweary soldier
resists the death-marked shrapnel.

Those who have died will sleep under a blanket of
rustling trees
but how will the living survive the enemy's yoke?
“September”

Night –
still and empty –
will hold everything:
injured pride
and destitution
sadness
and fear

From “A Bad Dream”
(Under German Occupation)

Incredible Movie To See

The Ghost and the Darkness (Based on a True Story)
With Michael Douglas, Val Kilmer

FLIGHT-PATH 3

CULTIVATING AND KEEPING GOOD FRIENDS

When in life didn't we all have the gift of at least one "good" friend? I hope none of us missed out on that one. Good friends are people who are there for us in rain or shine; who can be trusted with our most private secrets; who really do care about us and wait to see us happy and safe. As we grow older, friendship spills over into professional relationships, yet professional integrity is measured the same way as personal integrity: there must be trust, and genuine caring. Good friends are important every day. But imagine. Wouldn't they become even more important, even necessary if your life were in danger? Or if you needed to get a Friendship Network going to share necessities of life like food, water, shelter and basic health essentials? Take it from me. The answer is yes.

Take a look this way. We couldn't have redirected the US air-dropped arms to the Polish Home Army as successfully as we did without close collaboration with an Engineer called Stanislaw K-M. Because the army had to eat, staples like potatoes, pork (pigs) and liquor were available for them from the Kotlice Estate. One of the most active detachments was under the command of none other than an old school chum of mine, Marian Soltysiak "Barabasz".

In return for opening my home to his men to feed them, he made sure to "leave" plenty of food for me and mine in return. This was a common-sense agreement of logical exchange, otherwise all food was conscripted for consumption by the German Army only. So we never starved, thank God. At any one time we'd have up to 40 hungry friends and relatives at table to make sure *they* didn't starve either, including even Countess Colonna-Walewska, a direct descendant of Napoleon from his liaison with a certain beautiful young Polish lady during one of his visits to Poland. We also had two famous university professors who had fled the city of Poznań, which the German Reich had formally incorporated into part of the "occupied territories" of the "General Government of Poland".

As well, my secret pursuit of law studies at the Jagiellonian University would have tumbled down the tubes without the help of my friend and mentor Professor M. Malecki. He arranged all the contacts with other professors, and all required

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exams. I also decided that right after law exams would be the best time to marry Irene. But those arrangements I made myself. This secret university hosted among other prominent students, none other than Karol Wojtyla, later Cardinal Wojtyla and in 1978, Pope John Paul II. By another quirk of fate, the Pope and I actually look alike. Over the years we visited him several times at the Vatican.

Now about my life being in danger. Starving was one thing, but getting shot or seized during the night never to be seen again was something else – not only during the war, but for five years afterward. It didn't matter if the war was "over" (1945). If you were active underground resistance, you were never above suspicion. They kept stalking us. I was on someone's hit list, alright. Noway I'd let that stop me from living my life. I wanted to get married and that was that. But how to do it in secret without the whole country finding out?

Tradition called for three public announcements of marriage bans which would have really blown my cover. Again, connections with good friends did it. This time we appealed to the Bishop of Kielce himself who relaxed the law for us. First he waived the bans into one announcement only. Second, he waived the usual waiting period following bans, and allowed us to be married within hours that very same day, July 15, 1944. Still wish it would have been the 13th. Oh well. Super quiet, super fast, and effectively life-saving.

A year later in '45 I accepted a new posting in Romania. The Poland of my birth and boyhood was gone forever. I couldn't see myself living under Communism. Besides, it was too dangerous, what with all the secret police slithering around arresting people right, left and centre. To successfully escape, we used the calm, civilized approach. Special "diplomatic" trains had to be arranged to ensure "safe" passage. The journey from Warsaw to Bucharest took 12 harrowing days – not your usual train-trip. We were constantly questioned, intimidated. Armed soldiers kept hovering around, eyeing us warily like buzzards guarding their prey. A fresh batch boarded at every stop, and the interrogation would start all over again. We just prayed no one would get trigger-happy.

Even when my family and I relocated to Germany in 1948 – a son Andrew was born to us in Poland on March 22 of that year – they still didn't give up trying to get me. And still stubbornly, I refused to sever my connections with my activist friends even though it made my position most precarious. One day I got a call from a colleague from Bucharest. "Benedict"

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was one of the lucky ones who also managed to escape from Poland. He was in town. Could I meet him? We hid ourselves in some obscure cafe where he shared the details of his daring flight.

After that I thought things would have died down, but my high-alert inner warning system honed during the war told me to stay guarded. Sure enough. The Communists dispatched one of their Vice-Consuls to spy on me when I took over the Consulate of Poland in Baden-Baden in the French occupation zone of West Germany. One evening at a social gathering of Polish emigrés, he appeared looking quite the popinjay. At least to me. Mixed nationalities at these socials was quite usual, and I had made a great connection with the French Commanding Officer Maréchal Guillaume. Anyway, the Vice-Consul's first problem was that he loved to drink. Second problem: he arrived with a loaded gun. When you're a spy, I suppose you must.

Soon he himself got loaded. Drunk as a skunk he started shooting up the place. Thankfully no one was killed, but I saw my chance to get rid of him, and made my move. I informed my superiors that unless he was packed up and immediately returned to Warsaw, I would have no alternative but to have the French arrest him immediately. Naturally they chose to recall him to Warsaw to "rescue" him. Needless to say the incident got the spy off my back, not to mention greatly improving my profile with the French. "Operation Popinjay" decidedly propped up Poland's prestige in Western Germany.

Also working with me in Baden-Baden was Deputy Consul and Head of the Polish Military Mission, Major Jastrzembki (pronounced "yuschem-ski). He was an excellent man and friend. One day in '48 as I stepped off the Orient Express from a trip to Warsaw, I was startled to see that all my staff from the Consulate were on the train station platform to greet me. Some kind of celebration, or disaster? The latter. My Deputy with his whole family had disappeared. My employees had come to inform me early to soften the blow of my going into work the next morning and finding his office empty. Rumour had it he had either defected, or gone abroad, or I didn't know what to make of it. Peculiar things sometimes happened in various government circles. But he proved a friend indeed. Within two days a letter arrived for me with no return address. The postmark was Zurich. He was secreted away in a hotel there. Could I come right away for a secret rendezvous? His writing was coded for my benefit in such a way that it was

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clear he was defecting and I should do likewise. Definitely I wanted to meet with him personally for firsthand details and decided I'd go, but not immediately. If the Communists suspected something, they'd be eagle-eyeing my every move. I waited a safe two days. I also applied my motto: a diplomat thinks twice before he finally decides not to say a word.

After my self-imposed 24 hour silence, I made my getaway to Switzerland, hopefully undetected. Went straight to his hotel but it was already too late. He had just checked out. I knew it meant he must have left the country.

It was dangerous for me to have made that trip. If the Communists knew for certain he had defected, any association with him on my part if discovered, would have had me recalled from my posting. Yet I risked going because he was my friend. It was dangerous for him to write me because most mail was censored and risked revealing his secret location. But he wrote me anyway because I was his friend. I suppose he must have been under strict orders to reveal nothing to anyone while still in Germany. Yet at the eleventh hour he could not leave Europe without some word to me. It was an act of friendship imprinted on my heart, and the heart never forgets.

In late Fall of 1950 I made one last secret trip to Poland. I really wanted to see my parents; maybe for the last time. It was risky, but what wasn't? I managed to get to Kielce undetected, so I thought. Each time the doorbell rang, terror chilled us to the bone. The Secret Police! Ah, no not this time, thank God. Just another friend visiting on the sly. I managed to stay three full days. But with the shadow of discovery hanging over our heads, it seemed longer. Finally my father told me that I should save myself – simply walk away – and never return to Poland. It was just too dangerous. Of all the hard times I had endured, that was absolute worst. Walking away is never simple. His words and dear face are etched in me forever. But he was right. I was never to see my parents again.

With heavy heart I forced myself back to the railway station and boarded the train for Warsaw. Instinct drove me straight to my old friend and Department Director at the Ministry of External Affairs. He was definitely in the know, warning that the police were looking for me and that I could be stopped and immediately arrested at the border between Poland and Germany. I needed a cover. A diplomatic pouch with “strategic documents” was hastily compiled for me. I became an instant diplomatic courier, and dispatched on the “international” train for Czechoslovakia. International trains were seldom

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checked, stopped or boarded. I arrived safely in Baden-Baden without incident the next day, dazzled, amazed. Even more amazed when my secretary announced I had a visitor from the military. I looked up into the solemn eyes of an American Colonel.

“We knew of course you were in Warsaw”, he said slowly. My eyebrow arched. “Really!” I said casually, implying why *wouldn't* Americans always know everything about everything all the time.

“Yes”, he continued. “We were afraid for you. So I asked one of our people to warn you. Did you get the impression you were being warned”?

My answer had to confirm two things: one, that one of his “people” had indeed done his job and two, that I truly did appreciate this extraordinary unanticipated protection.

“Yes”, I nodded, “I got the *distinct* impression that I had been warned. I’m very grateful. Thank you *very* much”. I threw in some confirming body language to help the words hit home.

Fall flew into winter. I caught the worst flu of my life, hitting 41C and bed-ridden of course. In the middle of it all a group of young Polish diplomatic couriers arrived to take me for a scenic drive. “What bull!” I muttered under my breath. “If they’re couriers, I’m Billy the Kid”. I knew Communist tricks. They had trapped the Polish Consul in Munich that way. They were Communist kidnappers masquerading as couriers. Having snatched the Consul, they had drugged him with Evipan commonly used in those days to smuggle as many of us as they could get over the border into Polish prisons. At the door they were met by my wife loudly declaring my illness. Unbelieving, they mounted the stairs to my bedroom to confirm it for themselves.

When they saw I wasn’t faking it, they abandoned their plan and beat a hasty retreat. What scared them off, flu or fluke? In any event I was saved by this stroke of fate or angelic intervention. Kind of un-hero-like, to be saved by one’s own flu! From that day, however, I learned another important lesson: universe works in mysterious ways we must trust. When something “bad” hits you, it can be disguised as something good, even so far as saving your life. In this case, timing was everything. It usually is.

Eventually in 1951, destiny led me to Canadian shores. But no matter where I went or what I did, the bridge of stepping stones along the way was forged by close connections with

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literally hundreds of individuals of every possible age, profession, culture and creed you can think of. Each was a very special, uniquely qualified individual in a specific way. Many became and are still close to me and our family as you read these words.

There are two popular sayings I'd like to re-interpret. One is, "be good to people on the way up; you may need them on the way down".

Life does not necessarily work that way. My experience has been that when you are good to people, life moves upward and outward and never stops. I don't believe in down. If you're always looking up, down doesn't exist. There is just more and more up, all the time. More important, to form friendships out of fear, anticipating the day you'll fall, makes life a quicksand. You can lose all your friends that way as well as your joie de vivre. The idea is to foster both sincerely, and then you shall have both in abundance. The second goes like this: "it's not what you know, it's who you know". Life has shown me that both are equally important. It is like saying the glove is more important than the hand. But if you have not a hand, what use is the glove?

Good friends are people who are there for us in rain or shine; who can be trusted with our most private secrets; who really do care about us and want to see us safe and happy.

Good friends are important every day. But imagine. Wouldn't they become even more important, even necessary if your life were in danger? Or if you needed to get a Friendship Network going to share necessities of life like food, water, shelter and basic health essentials?

The heart never forgets.

Universe works in mysterious ways we must trust.

When something "bad" hits you, it can be disguised as something good, even so far as saving your life.

In this case, timing was everything. It usually is.

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The moon's smile wrapped itself into a faint glow,
from behind the stars it laughs a metallic rustle,
fortune, escorted by happiness, delights us,
and warmly whispers in your ear: "I am!"

But you don't see or hear this,
You
are sad today, strangely pensive,
your mood is somewhat surly today.
And so you must be told that laughter has not
disappeared,
only hidden itself and become inaccessible to us,
because:
The moon's smile wrapped itself into a faint glow,
from behind the stars it laughs a metallic rustle,
fortune, escorted by happiness, delights us,
and warmly whispers in your ear: "I am!"

"Friend"

You write, Dear Mother,
that at home everything is "as before"
that the days and fields have grown greyer
that it's sad to be alone

I know your life
is very sad now
your dreams interrupted
by the measured march
of soldiers' boots
in the still dark night
you recall that other Occupation
we survived together in our homeland

My thoughts are with you today
I hear your voice
I see your loving faded eyes
burning with a blue reflection
I share your powerlessness
so distant yet so near

Brave is the country
which mocks its own tears
though the heart cries out
and can complain
only to God

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But though theirs are
the fury, the hatred, the camps
and spilled fraternal blood
Ours remain the pride
and the future

Let us pray
for strength
and for courage

“Mother’s Day Letter”

Heart-altering movie to see

The Scarlet and the Black (Based on a True Story)

With Gregory Peck and Christopher Plummer

(Can be ordered through some video outlets. Very worthwhile).

FLIGHT-PATH 4

USING CREATIVE POWER

It comes in many mysterious ways: out of the blue; when you're least expecting it; when you're in trouble into full "red alert"; when there's a deadline; or when faced with an "impossible" task for which you have to "rack" your brains. Call it strategic thinking or lateral thinking – it all amounts to the same thing: when human beings MUST come up with a "perfect" solution, statistics prove they usually *do*! How? Where does the "power" come from? It comes from the wizard within, connected with the entire universe of unlimited possibilities.

During the war many of Poland's art treasures and libraries were destroyed or carted off by the Germans, then the Russians. During the Russian occupation, a high-school colleague of mine and Army Major Joseph Michalski became government rep for the Province of Kielce. I made sure to keep this in mind. Another "connection", I concluded, perhaps needed one day for good reason. My hunch paid off. Wanting to protect what was left of our treasures, I created "out of the blue" the idea that an art protection agency be established in the National Museum.

My friend agreed, and presented the local governor with an official proposal. To my surprise, the governor appointed me Deputy Director of Arts and Culture *and* Inspector for the province. That gave me "carte blanche" with the Arts and Culture Director himself to launch my protection campaign. Interestingly, my wife Irene and the Director's wife both worked in the same office in the same theatre, mine as admin director, his as literary director.

It all seemed quite perfect and cozy, but it meant a lot of very hard work I didn't see coming. No sooner had I joined, than the Director announced he was applying for a diplomatic post abroad – could I take over his position. It was 1945. I rebuilt the whole museum, theatre, revived the Association of Polish Literates and Journalists, and took on additional responsibilities as Literary Club Vice-President. In September he left for Brussels and I took over as full director.

I wondered whether there was something else going on *behind the scenes* to cause this creative protection idea of

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*Provincial Office of Culture and Arts (the former Palace of The Bishops of Kielce)
where George Korey was Director in 1945*

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mine. No sooner did the thought occur when I got a call from one of my older colleagues who was a director within the Ministry of Culture. He was tracking 60,000 “lost” books belonging to Prince Krzysztof (Christopher) Radziwill and learned that our office had acquired them from the Prince’s estate “Stopnica”. Could all 60,000 be returned? What could I do? Those “rescued” treasures officially belonged to public domain. All independent ownership was forbidden. But I wanted to help the Prince, so I had to tap the Harry Potter in me for Shot Number Two at creative power.

The Prince at that time also held the office of Director of Protocol at the Ministry of External Affairs. As Director of Arts and Culture, it was my responsibility to have all art items being reclaimed by our Ministry, catalogued. But once catalogued, they became public domain property permanently, forfeiting all personal rights to private ownership. I searched my mind for the answer. Up popped an idea of pure logic. I got my older colleague to write a letter to the Prince’s boss, the External Affairs minister himself. The letter would explain how the whole External Affairs Ministry would be helped *enormously* if the Prince had a reference library of oh, let’s say, about 60,000 books that we happened to have and would be willing to share from all the confiscated properties. We made sure to omit any mention that those 60,000 already belonged to the Prince anyway. The minister bought the idea; the Prince got his books back; and I felt very pleased and happy. My cataloguing workload was reduced by 60,000 items, and I felt my strategic manouverings around the system were worthy of the good cause they served.

The unexpected bonus was that I earned the friendship of a Prince, for life. Like the royal princely person he was, he was quick to express his lasting gratitude, adding that if I ever needed anything, he was at my disposal. I jumped on this right away. I asked to leave Poland preferably for a diplomatic position. Destiny was at my door again. Within a few weeks I was called to the Department of External Affairs in Warsaw. Would I be interested in being Cultural Attaché and Deputy Consul at Poland’s Embassy in Romania? I said yes. In March 1946, I arrived in Bucharest.

Serendipity came next at an official ceremony at which I met King Michael of Romania. Shaking hands and asking me how long I had been in his country, he was deeply honoured when I replied in Romanian, “only four months but I already speak your language”. Why had I bothered doing a quick-