A prisoner's reflections

YULIYA TYMOSHENKO

NCARCERATION is said to leave you with a feeling of helplessness and vulnerability. But the truth of life for a political prisoner, even for one on a hunger strike, is the opposite. As a prisoner, I have been forced to focus on what is essential about myself, my political beliefs, and my country. So I can almost feel the presence of the brave women and men, old and young, who have gathered in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities to defend their dreams of a democratic and European future. In prison, your hopes and dreams become your reality.

I am sure that Nelson Mandela would have understood my feelings and agreed. The South African apartheid regime may have locked him away for almost three decades, but in the great Soweto protests and the other demonstrations for freedom and equality, courageous young South Africans invariably looked to his example and felt his presence.

Around the world, most people now rightly celebrate the gentle dignity with which Mandela led South Africa out of the political wilderness. Even here, behind prison bars and 24-hour surveillance of the type that he experienced for so long, I can conjure the warmth of his broad smile, merry eyes, and those colourful Hawaiian-style shirts that he wore with such panache.

And I can admire his unyielding -- and, yes, sometimes wily -- commitment to reconciliation, which saved his country from the race war that those who refused to accept the end of white-minority rule saw as inevitable. How wrong they were, and how miraculous was Mandela's achievement in making even his most implacable enemies feel at home in post-apartheid South Africa.

But here, in this place, it is not Mandela the statesman who touches my soul and fires my imagination. "My" Mandela is the prisoner, the Mandela of Robben Island, who endured 27 years behind bars (18 of them on a rock in the South Atlantic) and yet emerged with his spirit intact, brimming with a vision of a tolerant South Africa, a country liberated even for apartheid's architects and beneficiaries.

No purges marked the end of white rule. There were no witch-hunts, nor was there summary justice. All that Mandela demanded was that the truth about the past be revealed. Through the unique innovation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Mandela found the only viable bridge between his country's racist legacy and its multi-racial present and future -- a combination of political genius and humane wisdom that only the greatest of leaders possess.

Mandela was able to guide South Africa to freedom, because he was able to see its future more clearly than those who lived through the apartheid years outside of prison. Indeed, he possessed that rare clarity of moral vision that prison -- perhaps like no other environment -- can nurture.

Imprisonment brought Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn this clarity as well. "Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor

between classes, nor between political parties, either -- but right through every human heart -- and through all human hearts," he wrote in *The Gulag Archipelago*. "This line shifts ... And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains ... an un-uprooted small corner of evil."

The ability to begin to see more clearly than most the inner workings of the human soul is one of the few gifts that imprisonment can bestow. Forced to reckon with your own vulnerability, isolation, and losses (and seemingly lost cause), you learn to look more carefully into the human heart -- yours and that of your jailers.

Mandela epitomised this rare gift. How else could he have personally invited one of his Robben Island jailers to attend his inauguration as South Africa's first democratically elected president?



Of course, behind Mandela's generous spirit was a character of steel. He bore his imprisonment for the sake of his cause. And he bore the anguish of the suffering imposed on his family. And yet he neither broke nor surrendered to the rage that would have consumed most people.

As usual, Mandela's own words about his day of personal liberation show how well he understood this: "As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison." And just as Mandela knew in his prison cell that apartheid would one day fall, I know in my solitude that Ukraine's ultimate triumph as a European democracy is certain.

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Mandela's children

JULIET TOROME

BEFORE I knew that Nelson Mandela existed, I thought our then-leader, Kenyan President Daniel Toroitich arap Moi, was the world's only statesman. I was five years old, and no world existed for me outside Nairagie Enkare, my birthplace in rural Maasailand. Moi was a mythical figure to me, because he didn't live in Nairagie Enkare, yet he was always present through radio, a technology too complicated for a child like me to understand.

Every newscast from the government-controlled radio station began with what "His Excellency, Holy President Daniel Toroitich arap Moi" had said or done. He visited a school. He planted a tree. He helped a women's group. He attended church. He said agriculture was the backbone of our nation. He said we were fortunate to live in Kenya.

Throughout the day, the airwaves were filled with songs repeating the Father of the Nation's message, and reminding Kenyans to follow in his footsteps.

Perhaps because what came

over the radio was so predictable, people sought alternative news from the BBC Swahili Service. On most evenings, at six o'clock, men gathered to listen at the homes of the few, like my father, who had radios. The news lasted only 30 minutes, so everyone had to be absolutely quiet. But, on February 11, 1990, the men began to say repeatedly, "He is free! He is free! Nelson Mandela is free!"

I'm sure that my father and his friends had heard earlier

from government radio that Mandela had been released, but they waited for verification from the BBC. They left before the news was over to go to a bar to celebrate. When my father came home that night, he was singing praises for Mandela. I never asked my father who Mandela was. The following year, I enrolled in school and began to

learn that the world extended beyond Nairagie Enkare. My teachers explained to me why Mandela's freedom, after 27 years in prison, meant so much to Africans -- from big cities to small villages. Europeans, I learned, had colonised Africa and stripped

Africans of the right to self-governance. As African countries began to gain independence in the 1950's, the white minority in South Africa was tightening its grip on power through a racial-segregation system known as apartheid. It was Mandela's fight against apartheid that led to his imprisonment.

By 1980, black Africans had taken over governance in every country on the continent except South Africa. Mandela's release from prison ten years later moved Africa one step closer to absolute independence. That mission was completed in 1994, when apartheid fell and South Africans chose Mandela as their first democratically elected president.

As I learned more about Mandela, I wondered how he had achieved the unimaginable, overcoming a 27-year ordeal to become the leader of Africa's largest economy. And, just when I thought that he had already made his mark on history, he shocked the world by announcing that he would not seek re-election after the end of his first term in 1999.

I was 14 then, old enough to understand how unusual it was for an incumbent African president to retire willingly. In my own country, for example, people were beginning to wonder whether Moi would leave office in 2002, when his second term expired. He had ruled Kenya for 13 years before a move in 1991 to reintroduce multi-party democracy paved the way for an election the following year. Moi was allowed to run again, as long as he honoured the constitutional two-term limit.

I feel extremely fortunate and honoured that the start of

my formal education coincided with Mandela's reemergence in African politics. His patience, civility, and politics of reconciliation provided me a better example of democracy and good governance than any civics class could have done.

Mandela embodied the type of leader that Africans had

in mind when they struggled for freedom from the European empires. Africans wanted leaders who would reconcile and reunite them -- leaders who would restore to them the dignity that colonialism had robbed.

Unfortunately for many African countries, freedom and independence ended up in the hands of a few who had tasted and become addicted to the repressive practices that Africans had spent decades fighting. They amassed untold wealth as hunger and disease ripped their societies apart and pushed more Africans deeper into poverty.

Indeed, more than two decades after Mandela walked through the prison gates, supposedly completing Africa's struggle for freedom, "Big Men" in countries like Congo and Zimbabwe continue to cling to power against the will of their people. Nevertheless, I am encouraged by the fact that, since Mandela left office, many African presidents -- including Moi and Thabo Mbeki, Mandela's successor -- have adhered to their countries' constitutions and left office without a fight.

I am also hopeful that Mandela has inspired other young

people like me to continue Africa's liberation peacefully -the Mandela way.

Juliet Torome, a writer and documentary filmmaker, was awarded Cinesource Magazine's first annual Flaherty documentary award. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2013. www.project-syndicate.org (Excusive to *The Daily Star*)

C.I.A. tie reported in Mandela arrest

DAVID JOHNSTON

HE Central Intelligence Agency played an important role in the arrest in 1962 of Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress leader who was jailed for nearly 28 years before his release four months ago, a news report says.

The intelligence service, using an agent inside the African National Congress, provided South African security officials with precise information about Mr. Mandela's activities that enabled the police to arrest him, said the account by the Cox News Service.

The report, scheduled for publication on

Sunday, quoted an unidentified retired official who said that a senior C.I.A. officer told him shortly after Mr. Mandela's arrest: "We have turned Mandela over to the South African Security branch. We gave them every detail, what he would be wearing, the time of day, just where he would be."

Mark Mansfield, a spokesman for the agency, declined to comment on the news-service report. "As a matter of policy, we do not discuss allegations of intelligence activities," he said.

Protecting Pretoria's Rule

By THOMAS JOSEPH

44 Lip

ACROSS

piece

Reports that American intelligence tipped off the South African officials who arrested Mr. Mandela have circulated for years. Newsweek reported in February that the agency was believed to have been involved.

Mr. Mandela is scheduled to visit the United States beginning June 20 for a five-city tour that will include talks with President Bush and a speech before a joint meeting of Congress

Congress.

The news-service report said that at the

time of Mr. Mandela's arrest in August 1962,

the C.I.A. devoted more resources to penetrating the activities of nationalist groups like the African National Congress than did South Africa's then-fledgling security service.

The account said the American intelligence agency was willing to assist in the apprehension of Mr. Mandela because it was concerned that a successful nationalist movement threatened a friendly South African government. Expansion of such movements outside South Africa's borders, the agency feared, would jeopardize the stability of other African states, the account said.

Arrest at a roadblock

A retired South African intelligence official, Gerard Ludi, was quoted in the report as saying that at the time of Mr. Mandela's capture, the C.I.A. had put an undercover agent into the inner circle of the African National Congress group in Durban. That agent provided the intelligence service with detailed accounts of the organization's activities, including information on the whereabouts of Mr. Mandela, then being sought as a fugitive for his anti-apartheid activities.

The morning after a secret dinner party with other congress members in Durban, Mr. Mandela, dressed as a chauffeur, ran into a roadblock. He was immediately recognized and arrested. The retired official said that because of concern over the propriety of the C.I.A.'s actions in the Mandela case, "higher authorities" required that the State Department approve any similar operations in the future. The report said the State Department refused on at least three occasions to allow the agency to provide South African officials with information about other dissidents.

Beware the "Black Swan"

IMAGES

SHIFTING

MILIA ALI

2007 book *The Black Swan*. According to Taleb, in the Old World people were convinced that all swans were white. The unexpected sighting of the black swan in Australia not only exposed the fragility of conventional knowledge, but also highlighted the significance of "what we don't know" as compared to "what we do know."

article about

President Kennedy,

I stumbled upon

the interesting

concept of the

"Black Swan"

theory, developed

by Nassim

Nicholas Taleb in

his best selling

Taleb defines a "Black Swan" as a highly improbable event with three main characteristics. First, it is an outlier, as it is outside the domain of regular expectations and no past experience can convincingly point to its possibility. Second, it creates a tremendous impact. Third, after the fact we often rationalise the event with the benefit of hindsight, thus making it seem less random, and more predictable. Although the concept is metaphorical, it can be applied to anything from historical occurrences like the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism to scientific revolutions like the spread of the Internet culture. In fact all events with low predictability and high impact follow the "Black Swan theory."

The above preamble on the "Black Swan" is not intended to initiate an

academic discussion, but to link the concept to events in Bangladesh. In my view, the theory applies to the demise of East Pakistan and the creation of an independent Bangladesh. The Pakistani leadership planned the March '71 crackdown to terrorise the Bengalis into a long period of submission by using fear tactics. However, the strategy unexpectedly boomeranged. Rather than being demoralised, the Bangladeshis revolted, galvanised, and fought a nine-month independence war. In this case the "Black Swan" fractured Pakistan and resulted in the independence of Bangladesh. The Pakistani leadership did not anticipate an outcome diametrically opposite to what they had expected. Hence they were inadequately prepared to deal with the conse-

quences for many years to come. More than forty years have elapsed since a "Black Swan" came to the rescue of Bangladeshis. Today, the nation is at a critical juncture: political decision makers need to make some hard choices to avert a calamity that could lead the country down a rocky road filled with unforeseen obstacles. Unfortunately, Bangladesh's leaders are deeply immersed in vendetta and brinkmanship based on their "predictable" assumption that politics is a zero sum game, where one party's loss will naturally lead to the triumph of the other. However, this may not turn out to be the case. What if the ongoing violence spirals out of control, plunging the country into an unexpected catastrophe? The impossible may then become a possibility. For example, it could unleash a right wing dictatorial takeover or an extreme left uprising or even a religious movement reversing the country's progress. Is Bangladesh

prepared to face the consequences of such an extreme occurrence?

There are still options for resolving the current gridlock. The ruling party, Awami League, needs to address the core issue of the caretaker/interim government more firmly, rather than bask in the hope that arresting a few opposition leaders will end the crisis. And the opposition (BNP -Jamat) cannot continue with their confrontational politics of destruction which they believe will paralyse the nation into terrorised submission. Needless to say, the latter strategy is causing irreparable damage to the country, its psyche and, most of all, its future prospects.

May be it's time for the leaders to give themselves a reality check. If only they would realise that a cataclysmic event is no longer a remote possibility but a high probability, they might be more inclined to revise their strategy and find an exit ramp before it's too late!

Like most other columnists, I implore the antagonists to talk to each other rationally with the aim of reaching a middle ground. It's highly likely that the advisors of the political leadership are assuring them that their confrontational approach will yield desired results. I would say to them: "Please don't heed such irrational advice. Take a step back and imagine the worst that could happen—a "Black Swan" scenario. Pre-empt the catastrophe and stop it from happening. Because if it does happen, posterity will hold you responsible for destroying the nation. A nation built on the sweat and blood of those who sacrificed their lives so that future generations could live in the comfort zone of secularism, democracy and economic stabil-



A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

On letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

VFT PLZ'A BJRBPA AF MWA
AMB DLPXRFA WE VFT GFZ'A
RTA L EBU ZWPXBCH WZ AMB
NLPMWZB. — ECWR UWCHFZ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE
WILL TO SUCCEED IS
IMPORTANT, BUT WHAT'S
MORE IMPORTANT IS THE
WILL TO PREPARE.
-BOBBY KNIGHT



HENRY by Don Tranchte



failure is many things to many people. With Positive Mental Attitude, failure is a learning experience, a rung on the ladder, a plateau at which to get your thoughts in

order and pre-

pare to try again.

QUOTABLE

Quote

"Like success,

W. Clement Stone