

## OBAMA'S EXCEPTIONAL ABSENCE

Stephen L. Bakke – December 20, 2010

### The Event

Over twenty-one years ago on November 9, 1989 an incredible event occurred. The Berlin Wall ceased being a barrier between oppression and freedom. For several decades, the U.S. led the defense of the isolated city of West Berlin. It started with U.S. sponsored airlifts and eventually significant numbers of our troops were present to defend the portion of West Berlin which was isolated from the rest of West Germany by the fortress-wall erected by the soviet sponsored government of East Germany. Well over 100 East Germans were shot down attempting to sprint that distance between the wall and freedom in West Berlin.

### A Great Leader Spoke Out – Against the Advice of Others

Why was the wall eventually removed? There are many reasons but no credible analysis will omit the most significant contribution of all – that of the pressure exerted by the United States and the exceptionally risky and heroic statements made by our leader at that time, President Ronald Reagan.

*“As I looked out a moment ago from the Reichstag, that embodiment of German unity, I noticed words crudely spray-painted upon the wall, perhaps by a young Berliner: ‘This wall will fall. Beliefs become reality.’ Yes, across Europe, this wall will fall. For it cannot withstand faith; it cannot withstand truth. The wall cannot withstand freedom .....General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”*

Those statements were made by President Ronald Reagan on June 12, 1987. And a little more than two years later the wall was torn down. **Our president’s leadership was a primary reason for this, one of the most profound expansions of freedom in memory.**

### The Commemoration in 2009

A little over a year ago, at the site of the first opening of the wall, there was an international celebration. And who wasn’t there? Our President of course! His schedule was described as being too crowded, of course, and he begged off. **Seriously, he did!** It’s my opinion that an appearance at this commemoration and celebration would have conflicted with his **downplaying of American exceptionalism and the U.S.’s (past) world leadership.** We were instrumental first in defending West Germany and West Berlin, and later created the situation whereby East Germany was liberated and the countries once again were joined under a single democratic government.

**He should have been there!** Who did he think he would offend by appearing there? Russia? Gorbachev was there to receive accolades from Chancellor Merkel of Germany. “Gorby” was available to receive Ms. Merkel’s thanks for making this all happen. Of course you have to give “Gorby” credit for being a pragmatic reformist (and not stupid, considering Reagan’s superior negotiating strength). Even our press didn’t give significant attention to President Reagan’s role in this liberating event – certainly one of the most significant contributions to freedom in the last century. Nor were reports critical of our President’s absence.

### **Hillary Was a Surrogate**

The President sent a video and Hillary introduced Obama by juxtaposing the fall of the Berlin Wall (and Soviet oppression which was not mentioned by her) with Obama’s own success tearing down the walls of discrimination, racism and all the other “challenges” our country has faced. Obama, the “messiah.” I quote Hillary: “I am deeply honored to introduce now a message from someone who represents the fall of different kinds of walls – of walls of discrimination, of stereotype, of character, the walls that too often are inside minds and hearts. Let me introduce a message from President Barack Obama.”

### **What They Said**

While I listened to both of their speeches I heard the following references:

- Obama was very precise to refer to “our friends on both sides of the Iron Curtain”. (Who’s he “kissin’ up” to there?) To his credit he did mention that the wall represented tyranny – but from whom? There was absolutely no mention of the Soviet Union – the builder of the wall and the oppressor of East Germany and other eastern European countries. And there was not a hint in his remarks of the true leaders/heroes of the event: President Ronald Reagan and his faithful partner/supporter Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the U.K.
- Hillary also left out references to all the things that Obama ignored, and added references to Poland and the Polish Pope as heroes of that era. In reference to saving West Berlin, she referred only to “allies doing the airlift” – nothing about the role of the U.S. in leading that effort.
- In the President’s short 2½ minute speech, he managed to make it “all about him.” A quote: “Few would have foreseen . . . . . that a united Germany would be led by a woman from Brandenburg or that their American ally would be led by a man of African descent. But human destiny is what human beings make of it.” Re-read that quote! He mentions himself as the “leader of the American ally.” Someone described this as “scrubbing” Reagan from the history of the event. And our President selfishly tried to gain advantage from that “scrubbing.”

According to Michael Reagan, there was only one reference to Ronald Reagan during the entire day. There was only a vague mention of Pope John Paul II and Walesa (by Hillary). Gorbachev was the one praised for causing the wall to come down. And there was no mention of this event representing the failure of communism.

## Who Snubbed Who?

Perhaps Obama's obvious minimizing of the significance of this event caused the conservative leaning Chancellor Merkel to say – "OK, he doesn't want to give the U.S. credit for their role in our freedom – so we won't." Or ..... perhaps it could be an intentionally subtle and backhanded reaction by Europe and Merkel to Obama's initially regrettable statements and apparent intentions which seemed to effectively throw our allies "under the bus" in terms of our commitment to their defense. And today we are dealing with the proposed START Treaty and much uncertainty as to what that all means.

## Obama's Absence Was Calculated

Obama's problem was, this would not have been an occasion of praising him or his vision – rather, it would have been an occasion reminding the world of America's exceptional performance in freeing Germany, and Ronald Reagan's most heroic efforts leading the process. **He just couldn't have that! He wouldn't have been the focus of attention.** After all, Reagan wasn't that big a deal – he didn't even win the Nobel Peace Prize. Anyway, according to Obama, America is NOT exceptional. He has expressed his view that the U.S. is just one of many countries, each with visions of being exceptional.

**This was an important lost opportunity for our President to truly wave the banner of good things the U.S. has done for the world. He didn't inadvertently fumble the ball, he intentionally threw it away!** When has he ever turned down an opportunity to do his familiar trot up to that beloved teleprompter and exhort the world to embark on some grand journey?

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**Our president lives on a different planet than I do! I just don't get it! I am not just disgusted or in disagreement, but often I am truly embarrassed by this administration. To me this was a really big deal and a big mistake!**

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*"We live today in the world that Ronald Reagan began to reshape ..... It is a very different world, with different challenges and new dangers. All in all, however, it is one of greater freedom and prosperity, one more hopeful than the world he inherited on becoming president ..... With the lever of American patriotism, he lifted up the world. And so today, the world – in Prague, in Budapest, in Warsaw and Sofia, in Bucharest, in Kiev, and in Moscow itself, the world mourns the passing of the great liberator and echoes his prayer: God Bless America." – Former Prime Minister, Lady Margaret Thatcher in her eulogy to Ronald Reagan in 2004.*