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TERLEZKI, STEFAN (1927 - 2006), businessman and politician

Name: Stefan Terlezki
Date of birth: 1927
Date of death: 2006
Gender: Male
Occupation: businessman and politician
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: Matthew W. Day

Stefan Terlezki was born on 29 October 1927 in Oleshiw, a village then in Poland (now in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine), the son of Oleksa Terletskyj (d. 1986), a farmer who also worked at the local brickworks, and his wife Olena (d. 1943). He grew up in nearby Antoniwka.

Western Ukraine was occupied by Russian forces in 1939 and annexed to the Soviet Union. Several of Stefan's family members were later arrested and deported to Siberia under suspicion of being Ukrainian nationalists. In 1941 the Germans invaded and occupied the area. During this time Stefan Terlezki was witness to the murders of several Jews. His father had him obtain and deliver false baptism certificates to save as many Jewish neighbours as possible.

In 1942, Terlezki was one of the school children selected by the Germans to serve as slave labour, and he was not to see his father again for 42 years. After arriving at a distribution center in Austria, he was bought at a slave market in Voitsberg, Styria by one Hansel Böhmer who had him work on his family's farm. Between 1942-45 he laboured on various farms in that region. In May 1945 the Soviets invaded and Terlezki was conscripted to the Red Army to fight the Japanese, but he managed to escape back to Voitsberg, then part of the British zone in Austria, where he worked as a cook in a British Army canteen. In 1948 he emigrated to Britain and was sent to work as a coal miner in Wales.

His catering experience enabled him to find alternative work in the canteen of a miner's hostel. After taking a course at the Cardiff College of Food Technology and Commerce, he worked his way up to managing the Cedars Hotel in Llanishen, and eventually became a hotelier running his own establishments in both Aberystwyth and Cardiff. He and his wife Mary from the Rhondda Valley married in 1955 and had two daughters, Helena and Caryl.

Terlezki's political career began in 1968 when he became a Conservative member of Cardiff City Council. He stood unsuccessfully for parliament in both elections of 1974 against James Callaghan in Cardiff South East. He became a well-known public figure, serving as chairman of Cardiff City Football Club between 1975 and 1977, but decided against travelling to the Soviet Union when Cardiff played Dinamo Tbilisi in the European Cup Winners' Cup for fear of being arrested and sent to Siberia as an army deserter.

Following the retirement of George Thomas, Terlezki was elected MP for Cardiff West in the Conservative landslide victory of 1983. He became known for his right wing views, such as bringing back the death penalty, compulsory military service and corporal punishment for hooligans. He also sought to replace May Day Bank Holiday with a Winston Churchill National day, Churchill being his political hero for winning the war. The treatment he suffered at the hands of both the Soviets and the Germans left him with a loathing of totalitarianism of all kinds, and he once referred to his adopted country as 'heaven on earth'.

Terlezki's father and sister had been sent to Siberia in Stalin's post-war purges of Ukrainian nationalists in the 1950s, and he persuaded Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe to raise the issue with Andrei Gromyko. In October 1984 his father was flown to London for a month, before returning to Ukraine where he died in 1986. Though Terlezki could not attend the funeral he and his family later visited his home village.

Terlezki was a hardworking constituency MP and increased his vote in the 1987 general election, but nevertheless lost his seat to Labour's Rhodri Morgan due to the collapse of the Social Democrat vote. In 1989, because of his wartime experiences, the Conservative Government appointed Terlezki as the UK representative on the Council of Europe's Human Rights Committee. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 Terlezki was supportive of Ukrainian independence and critical of the close ties which it retained with Russia. He spent the rest of his life championing Ukrainian issues such as entry to the European Union. He was appointed CBE in 1992. He published his memoirs, *From War to Westminster*, in 2005.

Stefan Terlezki died from prostate cancer on 21 February 2006 at Felindre Hospital, Whitchurch.

Author

Matthew W. Day

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