

In post-war Europe the sound of gunfire still made people

nervous. The war was over but another conflict was beginning, a battle of settlement, forgiveness and, sadly, revenge.

The political settlement of World War II between Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill meant that at war's end, the Soviets annexed Eastern Poland and incorporated it into the Soviet Union, while the rest of Poland became a puppet state with a communist government imposed by Russia.

The vast majority of Poles rejected this settlement and wanted to remain in the west where they could continue the political struggle for an independent Poland while maintaining their language, culture, and traditions for an eventual return to a unified Poland.

This historical fact had presented itself on the Scottish doorstep of number 356 Easter Road, Leith, through the abrupt arrival of a man who had been brought there by Craig's Father. He was called Alenti and he had been incarcerated in the Polish Resettlement Corps which had done little to resettle, and much to disrupt.

It seems that the leadership of this group was a moving feast.

Its hierarchy changed frequently, mainly due to its leaders being executed or 'disappearing' from the scene. Alenti had only been with the Corps for a few months when his turn came and he took over from his superior who had been shot in front of his family.

Was this promotion really a death sentence for Alenti?

How did this supposed hero of the revolution find himself chasing a young Scottish boy down tenement stairs in Leith, being tackled by the boy's Father and being shot at by military police?

The response to that question was to provide a very complex answer to the simple question, was Bill Erskine, a coward? Craig mused on the fact that his Dad's actions in the last few minutes may not have been those of a coward. He recalled Old Mac's story about the dubious nature of being judged a coward in military terms. If this all turned out to be factual, it could be Craig's Father who was facing a firing squad. Now that the adrenalin had dissipated, the emotion of fear had become uppermost.

At the end of World War II, Poland felt abandoned. The episode became known as the Western Betrayal. As the Polish armed forces had fought alongside the Allies during the war, they had expected some help in resettling themselves as a Free Poland. Many members of the Polish armed forces did not want to return to a country that was now under Communist control. It would not have bode well for them, that they had served with the Commonwealth forces during the conflict.

Alenti was one of those Poles who found themselves vulnerable to a more personalised clash with their fellow human beings following the war. During any such conflict, most people managed to form a bond to fight a common enemy. When that war finishes, it's as if the human psyche has formed a strong need

to hate something, to despise someone, to keep on killing after the armistice has sounded.