

“I LEAPT OVER THE WALL AND THEY MADE ME A
PRESIDENT”¹: THE RHETORICAL PHENOMENON
OF LECH WALESZA

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Abstract

The rise of Lech Walesa from shipyard electrician to leader of “Solidarity,” international icon of freedom, and first president of democratic Poland was closely bound up with rhetoric. Walesa’s idiosyncratic verbal style galvanized the masses and successfully confronted communist propaganda. The revolution of the workers on the Baltic coast was to a large extent a revolution in language. Walesa was also a skilled negotiator. As president, however, he was a controversial figure; his conception of democracy as a continuing war of words is widely credited with spelling the end of the idealistic “Solidarity” era. Today, allegations remain that Walesa was an agent provocateur and that the “Polish revolution” may have been a provocation that got out of hand. Some allege that Walesa’s myth was a creation of Western media, a function of people’s desires, and an accident of the historical moment. While there is no proof that any of these allegations are true and the documentary record reveals Walesa’s undeniable rhetorical prowess and political talent, his case provides material for reflection on the relationship between history, rhetoric, and political agency.

On August 30-31, 2005 Poland celebrated the 25th anniversary of the signing of the landmark “Gdansk Accords.” The Accords, signed on August 31, 1980 in the Gdansk shipyard by Lech Walesa and an envoy of the communist government following an 18-day strike and seven days of arduous negotiations, turned out to be the turning point in the Cold War and the beginning of the end of communism in Poland and Central-Eastern Europe. Over the entire month of August, hundreds of exhibits, films, public events, concerts, and academic conferences reminded the people of Poland, now a democratic member state of NATO and the European Union and a close ally of the United States, of what happened then and since. Gdansk, and especially the shipyard, was inundated with domestic and foreign visitors. On August 29, 2005, over 100,000 people participated in a concert in the shipyard by the French musician Jean

Michel Jarre, watched giant fireworks and a light show of images from the strike, and applauded Lech Walesa when he appeared on the stage. Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright—along with many other prominent politicians, academics, and leaders of international and civic organizations from Chile to China and South Africa—participated in an international conference “From Solidarity to Freedom” organized by the Lech Walesa Institute and the “Solidarity” Foundation Center. Other conferences were organized by the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Polish Institute of National Memory (the Polish equivalent of the Gauck Institute in Germany), and various universities.

While some of these events were mainly celebratory, many, especially the academic ones, represented continuing attempts to understand the phenomenon of “Solidarity” and come to grips with its heritage and meaning today. There are conflicting views in Poland today on what exactly happened in Gdansk in August of 1980, as well as conflicting opinions about the ultimate results. At the forefront of these conflicts, just as at the forefront of the watershed events of August 1980, stands the figure of Lech Walesa, one of the most recognizable figures of the twentieth century: leader of the strike in August 1980, leader of the “Solidarity” movement, *Newsweek’s* 1980 “Man of the Year,” winner of the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize, the third foreigner in U.S. history (after La Fayette and Churchill) to address a joint session of the Congress and Senate, the first democratically elected president of post-communist Poland, along with Vaclav Havel and Nelson Mandela among the most well-known leaders of democratic transitions, and, along with Pope John Paul II, the most celebrated Pole of recent times, the man about whom president George H. W. Bush said “Perhaps history makes people, but Lech Walesa made history” (quoted in Skorzynski 1997, 245).

Yet, some, including Walesa’s closest co-workers from the August strike, continue to allege that he was a secret police informer and agent provocateur, and that the “Polish revolution” could therefore be, ironically, a provocation that got out of hand. To others, especially many intellectuals, Walesa was an early hero who became a victim of his own meteoric rise to international celebrity, a simple peasant with a gift of repartee and idiosyncratic linguistic habits who happened to be at the right place at the right time to change history

and eventually become president to the detriment of the office and the country. To still others, Walesa remains a national hero and one of the great figures in Poland's history. Walesa himself remains politically active, even hinting from time to time at another run for the presidency, although most of his public activity consists of lecturing around the world, writing, making frequent public statements on a wide variety of national and international issues, and heading the Lech Walesa Institute Foundation, devoted to preserving the spiritual heritage of "Solidarity," promoting decentralization and local self-government in Poland, conducting historical research, furthering democratic labor movements throughout the world, and "promoting moral values in politics and public activity" (2005).

Hero or spy? A native political and oratorical talent who moved millions and outfoxed a totalitarian regime, or a buffoon swept up in events he unwittingly helped unleash, like the character of Chance the Gardener, the half-wit who becomes president in Jerzy Kosinski's classic novel *Being There* (made into the 1979 film starring Peter Sellers as Chance)? The verdict of history on the life and career of Lech Walesa is not yet in, and—considering the stakes for Poland's historic self-image, the continuing currency of recent history in Polish politics, and the fact that the transformation in Poland is far from over and that Walesa is still very much alive and kicking—it may be a long wait for any conclusive assessments.

Whatever the final verdict may be, Walesa's story, like the story of the Polish negotiated revolution, remains inextricably bound up with words. From his legendary leap across the shipyard fence (which has become a political founding myth, like the story of George Washington's little cherry tree) to the presidency of newly democratic Poland, Lech Walesa has been, as many Polish scholars have noted, to a large extent a "linguistic" phenomenon (Bralczyk 2003; Frasz 1998). His leadership during the negotiations with the government commission in August 1980 was critical to the success of the strike. His words, broadcast over the shipyard PA system and reported in the foreign press and samizdat publications galvanized the broad masses of ordinary people. He was a key symbol of struggle and hope through the 1980s and a major player in the events and breakthrough negotiations that led to the transition. Many of his idiosyncratic sayings have become a part of the Polish language. His

defeat at the hands of a post-communist presidential candidate signaled an end of an era in Polish politics and political rhetoric, although he continues to maintain an active and important, if idiosyncratic, presence on the margins of the political scene. To the extent that rhetoric is both an art and a practice and the history of rhetoric a history both of changing theories and changing practices, as well as of history-changing practitioners, the phenomenon of Lech Walesa merits consideration for the impact his verbal behavior has had on a large European nation, and indirectly on the world, at a specific moment in late-twentieth century history. My purpose in the following essay is to offer a brief account of this behavior and its impact as a part of the continuing effort of rhetoricians to better understand the complex relationship between rhetoric and history, as well as to help bring this aspect of Lech Walesa and recent Polish history to American readers.

The People's Tribune: Walesa's Leap Into History

The first public taste of Walesa's rhetorical acumen came four years before the world heard about him or "Solidarity," in June 1976. The workers in the Gdansk shipyard were protesting a steep increase in food prices declared by the government the day before. The director of the shipyard tried in vain to find the words to begin a dialog with a gathering angry crowd. The atmosphere was tense, threats began to fly. Suddenly, an eyewitness relates, a young worker jumped up on an electric cart [the cart later, in 1980, became Walesa's movable rostrum and a potent symbol of "Solidarity"—a rhetorical symbol, one may add] and shouted: "Shipyard workers! You, hull assembler, welder, painter, pipe maker, locksmith, and you, member of the intelligentsia!" The crowd erupted into enthusiastic applause (quoted in Fac 1990, 48). Those first recorded public words already show the major characteristics of Walesa's verbal style: directness, personal appeal, addressing individuals not abstractions (in contrast to the standard communist forms of address: "workers" "comrades," or "citizens"), inclusiveness, empathy. Walesa was 33 years old. The strike did not last. Shortly afterward, Walesa was fired.

Walesa had already been active in the budding political opposition on the Baltic coast since its very beginnings following the December

1970 riots (Walesa 1992; Skorzynski 1997). The December “events,” as government propaganda euphemistically referred to them, were the turning point in the Polish workers’ attitude toward communism’s promise. As in 1980, the center of activity was Gdansk, along with the two other major Baltic ports, Gdynia and Szczecin. In the course of several days of violence, a crowd of shipyard workers made its way to the police headquarters. The crowd pushed the 27-year old Walesa to the front to talk with the police about their imprisoned comrades. The negotiations, however, were quickly interrupted by gunfire and street battles. Shortly afterward, Walesa was arrested at his home. It was then that, as the price of his freedom and return to the shipyard, he “signed” something (Skorzynski 1997). The nature of that “something” remains an object of speculation, although it could have been (and, according to Walesa, was) simply the usual statement of secrecy that anyone (including the present author) who was called for a talk by the state security had to sign.

Walesa burst onto the national and world stage by way of the legendary “leap over the fence” to assume the lead of the historic “Solidarity” strike on August 14, 1980. An eyewitness relates how Walesa strode up to the general manager, who was trying to persuade the workers to return to work, and asked, “in a threatening tone,” “Do you recognize me? I had worked for ten years in the shipyard and I still consider myself a shipyard man, because the crew trusts me.” Then he shouted: “We begin an occupational strike!” “Hurray!” the crowd yelled in response (Skorzynski 1997). The following 18-day strike ended with the signing of the historic “Gdansk Accords” on August 31, 1980, in which a government commission, headed by a deputy prime minister, accepted all of the 21 postulates presented by the workers, the first of which was a demand for free, independent, self-governing trade unions. (The original copy of the postulates, scrawled in black paint on wooden tablets by two shipyard workers and hung over the shipyard gate, has since been put by UNESCO on its Human Heritage list). Walesa, who led the negotiations on behalf of the workers as leader of the Interfactory Strike Committee, became the most well-known person in Poland, after Pope John Paul II, and the topic of front page news all over the world (for an eyewitness description of the strike, see Garton-Ash 1983; for a translation of the full text of the talks, see Kemp-Welch 1991).

During the difficult seven-day talks, Walesa showed himself to be a tough and wily negotiator. Even though he was caught, like everybody else, by the dynamic of the unfolding events, keeping up rather than steering them, his leadership was critical to the success of the strike (Skorzynski 1997, Badkowski 1990).

He avoided getting overwhelmed at the start by the flood of formulaic words of the deputy prime minister or bogged down in procedural details or split-hair arguments and focused instead on specific examples that illustrated general principles and problems. For instance, in the first minutes of the negotiations, in response to the deputy prime minister's long-winded speech promising that none of the striking workers would be arrested or harassed by police, Walesa responded: "We don't see it quite like this. Plenty of people are sitting in prison, and plenty more are beaten up. These are the facts. Since we were to speak frankly, I think this matter should be made known. We'll give you the names if you like" (in Kemp-Welch 1991, 43). Upon which, he presented the deputy prime minister with a list of arrested and beaten workers.

He did not dominate the discussions and let other workers and government representatives speak, skillfully intervening to move the negotiations forward through stumbling blocks and seemingly insurmountable disagreements. When the discussion of free trade unions threatened to bog down at the very start in details of the labor code and legislative procedure, Walesa interrupted: "I suggest we move on. This is a large subject and we won't exhaust it now. Everyone will express their views and then we'll tie them all together" (in Kemp-Welch 1991, 44). Walesa used this strategy of moving on past the difficult parts to return to them later or working through them in smaller groups successfully through the entire course of the negotiations. Incidentally, the statement also expresses Walesa's attitude toward and conception of democracy that will persist relatively unchanged for the rest of his career: democracy as pluralism of the widest possible range of views that first need to be expressed and then, somehow, will be "tied together" in discussion to arrive at a resolution. He will repeat that sentiment in many different ways later as leader of "Solidarity," negotiator, and president.

Walesa did not mince words, calling things by their names, opening up a space by his own example for open expression—an

unprecedented move in a regime that used the expression “frank talks” habitually in media propaganda to describe any official meetings but where actual frankness was non-existent. Walesa skillfully tied his license to openness to his social ethos, proclaiming at the start in response to a lengthy official explanation concerning the legality of prosecuting striking worker: “ I can say straight out because I am a worker and don’t mince words that they were rigged” (quoted in Kemp-Welch 1991, 48).

When needed, however, Walesa was persistent and uncompromising, with dogged attention to detail and to fine shades of potential meanings and interpretations. On the penultimate day of negotiations, a Saturday, in the face of pressure to hurry from the deputy prime minister and from many workers who wanted to get home to their families on Sunday, Walesa urged caution, care, and waiting and would not be rushed. When the tired deputy prime minister promised to simply have the agreement prepared in Warsaw by Monday as negotiated, Walesa insisted:

“Prime minister. It really won’t be too much to go through these most important points. They won’t take long. We have waited all this time. Let’s work on Saturday and Sunday to finish it and have it all in writing. You will come back and let us know what it looks like there [in Warsaw]. There’s really no hurry here. Why should we rush into agreement? [applause] If all goes well, we really do want to go back [to work] on Monday. But we must have it [the agreement] in black and white.”

[Deputy prime minister] Jagielski: “It will be in black and white.”

Walesa: “*Will be*, but we want to *have it*.” [huge applause] (in Kemp-Welch 1991, 120, my emphases, corresponding to Walesa’s actual placement of stress).

The distinction drawn by Walesa between the uncertainty implied in the prime minister’s promise of “will be” and the desired concreteness of actual “having” is pure Walesa; in Polish, it has slightly humorous overtones, smacking of both semantic play and a dogged, peasant-like persistence that attaches itself to what from a more “intellectual” standpoint might appear as a mere linguistic detail. It is such dogged persistence, however, in the face of an apparent detail, made palatable by the hint of almost self-parodying humor but unyielding nevertheless, that will remain characteristic of Walesa’s negotiating and argumentative strategy throughout his

career. One has to actually hear the exchange to fully appreciate the attitude communicated by Walesa's tone: the picture it evokes is of some simple peasant, cap in hand, smiling with apparent embarrassment at his own forwardness in the face of "authority" but doggedly if somewhat sheepishly and in a misleadingly light tone insisting on a single syllable and placement of stress. The image is humorous; the doggedness and the potential tension, not to say threat, behind it, kept at bay by the light, almost humble, tone, are not. That tension, between the apparent humor of the words and lightness of tone and the lurking deadly seriousness of purpose are very characteristic of Walesa verbal encounters.

Throughout the negotiations, Walesa's conversational, man-to-man delivery, normal tone of voice, colloquial speech, frequent personal pronouns, and highly idiosyncratic phraseology contrasted sharply with the deputy prime-minister's loud, high-pitched, emphatic cadence with a characteristic lilt typical of what a Polish scholar had called the "megaphone" delivery of communist officials, who spoke at rather than to people and who rarely appeared to address individuals (Bralczyk 2003).

In a stroke of what turned out to be public relations genius, Walesa insisted that the negotiations be broadcast on the shipyard's PA system. In this way, the crowd of workers gathers outside of the building, as well as the citizens outside the shipyard gate, indirectly participated in the talks. A political system is also a rhetorical system (Farrell, Hauser). Walesa's speech, broadcast throughout the shipyard and beyond through the PA system and recorded and beamed back to the country through Western media constituted a challenge to the very foundations of the system.

One of these foundations was the separation between private and public speech. Legitimate political speech was delimited in subject matter, manner, style, and delivery. Not everybody could say just anything in any way and anywhere. In fact, according to implicit official "speech act" framework behind public discourse, only authorized agents could engage in authorized varieties of political speech in designated places and on designated occasions (Bralczyk 2003). Private speech was a repository of individual values, particularistic attitudes, and private interpretations; it was thus potentially dangerous and was severely limited in public discourse

(communist officials, for instance, never used the first-person pronoun and never spoke in their own name). Walesa's personal, folksy, idiosyncratic and spontaneous speech, beamed live to the public, represented a violation of this separation and threatened a release of potentially dangerous energies.

Another fundamental challenge was the emergence of real speakers, real audiences, and polyvocality. As one Polish scholar noted, the dominant pole in the rhetoric of the communist regime was the "sender" (Bralczyk, 2003). Typically, political decisions were made in closed fora and then announced to the public as official policy in a way that maintained the fiction of the leadership as a united front. A prominent Polish scholar of communist-era political discourse described this as the "monologic" quality of communist discourse (monologic here means two things: absence of dialog, of assumption of possible response and disagreement, as well as absence of polyvocality, of dialogism in the Bahtinian sense, since every official communiqué and speech said exactly the same things in exactly the same words) (Glowinski)**. Thus, officials in the government delegation wanted to negotiate with Walesa and the strike committee in private and then announce the agreement to the rest, couched in appropriate official phraseology and giving the impression of consensus of opinion. Walesa's insistence on broadcasting the negotiations in real time (he also wanted the media to do the same, but the officials balked) thus violated one of the fundamental precepts of political decision making and political discourse by potentially revealing to an outside public audience the disagreements, awkward gropings, differences, and personalities behind the talks, not only on the strikers' side but also among the government representatives. In turn, the awareness of a real, live audience, one neither captive nor carefully screened, as well of the responsibility to party comrades back in Warsaw, put a severe strain on the officials, who repeatedly insisted that they needed to return to Warsaw for consultations and did not have the authority to make decisions or public announcements.

But perhaps Walesa's greatest asset, during the strike and afterward, was his speech, propagated through the loudspeakers from the meeting room, during his frequent updates on the shipyard gate and from his ubiquitous movable rostrum, the electric cart, and in articles

and interviews with Polish and foreign journalists disseminated widely through samizdat press, radio Free Europe, and other channels.

The chief characteristics of Walesa's speech include (I use the present tense, since Walesa lives and still speaks as he used to) directness, simplicity (which his critics equated with anti-intellectualism and populism), dynamism, colloquialism, and idiosyncrasy. He prefers direct, simple verbs of action, especially verbs of movement: hit, push, pass, strike, kick, fix. He likes personal pronouns: I, you, we, us ("I" being his favorite). His language is colorful, full of common, folksy similes and metaphors: "We are going toward [Europe] by bicycle, the West [went] by car" (quoted in Frasz 1998, 62); "One needs a buck, one needs a bull, otherwise the flock of goats or cows scatters in all directions, wherever there is a little grass to chew on, and nobody chooses the right way. A flock without a leader is a thing without sense, without a future" (Interview with *Corriere della Sera*, March 7, 1981, quoted in Czyzewski and Kowalski 1990, 88-89). At a public gathering in 1981 in Radom he said: "We need a strong, reasonable government, which will not interfere [with us], but it must have time to rearrange the furniture and move the old [furniture] into the lumber room" (quoted in Skorzynski 1997, 227). After the dramatic events in Budgoszcz in March 1981, where police brutally beat up Solidarity activists, Walesa said: "We want national concord, but we will allow ourselves to be hit in the face" (quoted in Skorzynski 227). In 1996, in an attempt to defend himself against charges that as president he did not prevent the post-communist party from regaining power, he described political parties as being "like sausages in a store: blood sausage—the communists, headcheese—the greens, and so on. The customers [the voters] choose what they want. Why should I forbid them to buy blood sausage?" ("Lista Walesy" 1996, 18).

Walesa sprinkles his utterances with folksy sayings, which he makes up on the spot and of which he appears to have an inexhaustible supply: "today the elites are playing ping-pong and the public is trying to keep an eye on the ball"; "Who is better, a chess master or a boxing champion?"; "At the margins of democracy there must always be some manipulation"; "The best discoveries are made by amateurs; I am an amateur" (quoted in Kurski 1993, 58); "Break the thermometer; you won't have a fever" (quoted in Frasz 1998, 62). Many of his sayings have become fixed in the Polish language and in political folklore. He

also simplifies and categorizes potentially difficult concepts in picturesque ways that make them memorable and easy for ordinary people to understand: "I said that Poland needs two legs: left and right [Walesa's standard way of referring to the left and right sides of the political spectrum]. Now I repeat that each has five toes. Therefore, why not try these ten solutions?" (*Zycie Warszawy*, August 25-26, 1990). He also likes large numbers, which he tosses off without much regard for their veracity: 500 political parties were going to spring up in Poland during the first phase of democracy, 10,000 Western companies were going to be paired off with their Polish counterparts, 100 million refugees were going to inundate Western Europe if the West did not support post-communist economies, and so on (Kurski, 1993 58). In his instinctive preference for simplicity, colloquial language, anecdotes, hyperbole, and direct appeal to the emotions and imagination rather than intellect Walesa resembles former US president Ronald Reagan. Walesa also returned to public speech the categories of common social politeness that had disappeared in official communist-era discourse, with its ubiquitous "comrades," "citizens," or the plural "you." For example, Walesa's personal appeal to voters to vote for the Solidarity block in the landmark June 1989 elections began "Gentle Ladies/Sirs! Dear Voters!"—at the time a startling innovation in the conventions of public address (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 19, June 2, 3, and 4, 1989, 1)

Against the background of dead communist newspeak, Walesa's language immediately appeared fresh and human. It contrasted sharply with the language of communist officials: it was direct, authentic, and spontaneous—everything official language was not. According to Arkadiusz Rybicki, a long-time associate and secretary to Walesa between 1983-88 and collaborator on his autobiography, "[Walesa's] career is founded on the fact that he was able to say the very basic things. He stood on the [shipyard] gate and called things by their real names . . ." (quoted in Kurski, 1993, 54). The idiosyncrasies of Walesa's speech appealed to the imagination of the crowds and were enthusiastically applauded by intellectuals. Commentators on the events of 1980 emphasize the centrality of the experience of Walesa's speech to the experience of freedom and the breaking of barriers to civic participation. According to one prominent sociologist and eyewitness,

[t]he workers were [supposed] to keep quiet, and when they were occasionally allowed to speak, [they were supposed to speak] only according to a prepared script. Walesa appeared as the master of his own voice. Not as someone who takes on and imitates somebody else's speech, but as someone who uses his own unique expression. Before our eyes the triumph of the 'human language' took place, of original, free, private, individual speech. Of course that coincided with [other suppressed] emotions, needs, longings. And at once tongues were untied, everybody started speaking, the time of a great national utterance had come. . . . [The] unique revolution of the workers of the [Baltic] Coast consist[ed] in the opening of the mouth, the return of speech" (Janion 1990, 134-5).

One of Walesa's greatest rhetorical assets was his ethos. Walesa genuinely represented his social milieu. His biography, for one who was to become a labor leader and challenge the communist establishment on its own ground, was impeccable: a peasant by birth, an industrial worker with basic technical education, employed in a large, high-visibility "privileged" state enterprise (such workers represented, according to official ideology, the vanguard of the proletariat, the leading edge of the revolution, and constituted the most celebrated social class). His credentials in regard to his fellow workers and average Poles were equally impeccable: churchgoing Catholic with a large family, participant in the events of 1970 and 1976, fired from his job for political activity. The working-class accent, dialectical interferences from country speech, occasional faulty grammar or stylistic infelicities, and frequent lack of decorum worked in Walesa's favor as a genuine representative of the people.

Walesa's ethos made it impossible for the authorities to ignore him or dismiss him as another "dissident" or "class enemy." His no-nonsense, working class approach confronted communist officials with the kind of rhetoric they praised in theory but that was furthest from official practice: the straightforward, no-nonsense rhetoric of the working class, based on personal experience, common sense, and calling things as they appear to everyday experience and by their everyday names. According to one observer, the "secret of Walesa's stunning success was basically the secret of his speech as an expression of his person and an expression of [his social] milieu. He came across as someone who says exactly what he wants to say. And nothing more" (Janion 1990, 132). In a political context based on promotion of the myth of working class leadership and "ideological-moral unity of the nation" (a ubiquitous 1970s propaganda slogan), critique of bourgeois

individualism, and stock, ideologized phraseology that ignored everyday experience and never called things by their common names, the conjunction of impeccable class ethos, seemingly genuine and idiosyncratic persona, and plain-speaking common sense was revelational, explosive, and revolutionary.

Walesa's speech projected a personal world, a world in which things were done "man to man," in which "I" and "we" were the most important subjects, in which an individual was an agent in a direct, active, literal sense (Bralczyk 1990). His linguistic behavior thus embodied one of the major political postulates of "Solidarity" and the entire Polish revolution: the "agentification (Pol. upodmiotowienie), in the sense of empowerment, of the people. "Upodmiotowienie" actually translates literally as "subjectification," as in being a "subject" rather than merely an "object" of action (including rhetorical action). In this respect, Walesa's speech embodied not only his personal and social ethos, but also the ethos of "Solidarity" as an egalitarian social movement based on the recognition of the unique "voice" and "dignity" of each individual and each social group. "With his linguistic behavior," a Polish scholar wrote, "Walesa wrote himself into the broader process of democratization of the contemporary Polish language . . ." (Fras 1998, 58). In the specific conditions of the early 1980s in Poland, grammar, rhetoric, and politics became intertwined in a particularly historically productive way through a unique conjunction of individual agency and larger social, political, and technical (media) forces.

Toward the Breakthrough: Walesa's Rhetoric through the 1980s

The legalization of free trade unions in the wake of the signing of the Gdansk Accords of August 31, 1980 opened the way for an unprecedented civic mobilization under the umbrella movement of "Solidarity" and resulted on a rapid escalation of pent-up vindicationist demands in the economic, social, and political arena that the communist authorities could not contain and could not, or would not, satisfy. Threatened with loss of control and economic collapse, as well as, presumably, pressure from the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact neighbors, the authorities rolled out the tanks. The period known today

as the “First ‘Solidarity,’” begun with the Gdansk Accords of August 31, 1980 ended with the declaration of martial law on December 13, 1981. Walesa, along with thousands of other activists, spent the next year in internment. He was released in November of 1982, as a “private citizen.” “Solidarity” was delegalized and much of its leadership went underground. (Until the breakthrough Round Table talks in April 1989, the word “Solidarity” remained officially unmentionable; it was signified in the media and official communications with the quoted capital letter “S,” usually preceded by the adjective “former”—in Polish “była”—often also abbreviated to its first letter “b.” Thus, printed references to “Solidarity” typically took the form of “b.S.”)

Although he remained the symbolic leader of the union, Walesa did not go underground, but remained in touch with its cells and advisors, balancing, in his own words, between social isolation, inactivity, and prison (Skorzynski 1997, 231). In April 1983, he returned to work in the shipyard. The major direction of Walesa’s activity through the rest of the 1980s became seeking some sort of negotiated agreement with the authorities, whose violent overthrow he considered unrealistic, to create a space for pluralism in public life under the aegis of a revived “Solidarity” (Skorzynski 1997; Walesa 1992, 2004). According to a historian, during this period Walesa took from the Polish bishops, and especially from the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Wyszynski, his style of doing politics: “constant readiness to talk and patient waiting for the chance to realize his goals” (Skorzynski 1997, 227). For this, he was criticized for being “soft” by “Solidarity” firebrands, who wanted to remain in confrontational opposition and exact concessions from the regime through strikes and economic pressure.

A chance came in November 1988, when Alfred Miodowicz, the leader of the official, government-sponsored trade unions and a member of the party Central Committee, challenged Walesa to a televised debate. Miodowicz and his backers hoped that in the glare of the spotlights Walesa’s myth, fed by his enforced absence from public life, would evaporate, exposing Walesa as a primitive, incoherent peasant and dangerous extremist, which was how official propaganda presented him over the preceding seven years.

The Walesa-Miodowicz debate took place on November 30, 1988. It was an unprecedented event: a member of the Central Committee

was debating a “private citizen,” the leader of an illegal, officially non-existent organization. According to official data, it became the second most watched media event ever in Poland, after the ingress of Pope John Paul II in 1978 and ahead even of the world soccer championship (official party data, reprinted in Dubinski 1999). The debate was a resounding defeat for Miodowicz and a triumph for Walesa, who was well coached by his advisors. Walesa’s common-sense, plain talk, and genuine faith in the capacities and potential of ordinary people, expressed in his own inimitable language, stood in sharp contrast to the sloganeering and nit-picking party hack who appeared capable only of ritual defenses of every aspect of the status quo. The initially confident and patronizing Miodowicz, who began with a long harangue on the dangers of pluralism and the problems that having two competing labor unions would present in individual enterprises, was quickly reduced to slumped, helpless silence and even to having to nod in agreement as Walesa responded with a broad, principled defense of pluralism that could be summarized as let’s give pluralism a chance, since its lack got us to this point; people are intelligent and, given a chance, they will work out the details and agree on solutions to specific problems as they occur; countries that we all recognize, even though we may not say it, as a lot better off have pluralism; and why be so afraid of your own people, anyway? In the most devastating statement of the debate, Walesa said, among other things:

Pluralism is necessary in Poland. . . . It is necessary because realities speak to that, in every enterprise, in spite of everything [the government has done to try to address problems and suppress dissent]. After all, even those strikes [that presumably disrupted the almost bankrupt economy and that Miodowicz kept harping on as the major argument against legalizing “Solidarity” and pluralism] say what? Precisely that the stuff of dissatisfaction is accumulating and after a certain time it explodes. So one needs to give this stuff of dissatisfaction some other outlet, namely a chance to work toward solving these problems. . . . We *must* come to an understanding. Poland *needs* agreement. . . . Therefore, the question is *how*, not *whether*, we [“Solidarity”] should exist. If you make a manly decision that there is room for pluralism, we all immediately roll up our sleeves and together, with all of Poland, begin to work, because time flies, because our youth is fleeing [to the West], And if you help with that, the roundtable [conference between the government and the opposition] will come out beautiful. And [what I’m talking about is] not that table of which the prime minister says that it will be big and well laid (well, I don’t know about that, for now we don’t see that, we *want* to lay it), but *together*, we can

lay it.” (Taped broadcast, Polish state television channel 1, my translation and emphases to reflect Walesa’s emphases)**

All the qualities of Walesa’s speech that people found so appealing in the early 1980s were there again, this time for the first time ever on national television. For example, to the loaded question by Miodowicz whether he supported the “democratic changes” introduced so far by the government, Walesa responded in characteristically metaphoric, folksy, humorous, and indirect fashion, avoiding either explicitly criticizing the government for not doing enough, thus opening himself up to the charge of being an extremist, or endorsing its policies, thus opening himself to cooptation: “We are going forward step-by-step, while people [today] drive cars” (taped broadcast, Polish state television channel 1, my translation).**

The debate came at a critical moment in the still clandestine and tentative “talks about talks” between the authorities and the opposition aimed at paving the way for an official “roundtable” meeting, and contributed to a decisive shift in stasis. Before the debate, the authorities refused on principle to acknowledge the existence of “Solidarity” and even to mention its name, which Walesa demanded as a precondition for his participation in any “roundtable.” The refusal prevented Walesa and his colleagues from talking in the name and on behalf of the union, which weakened their negotiating position, since as essentially private citizens they represented no electorate and had no legitimacy to make demands and remained open to the propaganda charge of trying to “sell out.” After the debate, however, pretending that Walesa was a nobody whom the authorities could easily manipulate became impossible. The debate caused deep shifts in public opinion; according to official polls, 73 percent of Poles were for the legalization of “Solidarity” and only 3 percent was against (official party report reprinted in Dubinski 1999, 153), which meant that even a significant percentage of party members now supported the legalization of “Solidarity.”

The decisive shift in stasis wrought by the debate was described bluntly at a meeting of the Politburo on December 1, 1988 by the Minister of Internal Affairs, who was responsible for negotiations with the opposition and was the chief architect, on the government side, of the “roundtable” talks. The minister’s account is worth quoting at some

length, since it helps understand the rhetorical situation and the thinking and strategies of the authorities, thus revealing the rhetorical context in which Walesa operated in this decisive period, treading a fine line between the potential for a historic breakthrough and the risk of a conservative backlash that would destroy any chances for a compromise:

As a result of the televised debate Miodowicz-Walesa we may have to deal with quite a radical change in the internal situation. The effects of the debate may turn out to be quite far-reaching and deeply disturbing of the status quo along the government-opposition line. . . .

The stereotype of Walesa's personality, represented up to now by party propaganda, has been completely ruined. For many party members this may come as a real shock. To a large extent there may occur accusations of lying to party members directed at the party leadership and the propaganda apparatus.

Walesa presented himself as a politician of great stature, with a clear and convincing vision of the country's future. He turned out to be a man with a constructive attitude, motivated by a will toward real dialog and understanding. In contrast to the back-and-white schematic picture represented in official propaganda, his personal qualities came out very advantageously: faith and conviction in the rightness of proclaimed slogans, intellectual rigor, personal culture, and discipline in speech. Walesa's slogans were argued clearly and in a manner convincing to the public. . . .

It appears that Walesa definitively closed the past phase of preparations for the roundtable. He did it in a manner advantageous to "S." . . .

In this situation an attempt to break off the talks by our side, along with an attempt to shift the blame to "Solidarity" may turn out to be completely futile and unconvincing even to party members.

On the other hand, continuation of the dialog—after the television debate—may turn out to be possible only on a higher political level.

We must take into account that the present point of departure of government negotiators may be rejected by the other side and is not even sufficient to maintain working contact.

For this purpose it is necessary to give a new signal from our side, foremost in the form of a declaration in regard to "Solidarity," with the actual name used in the text. (reprinted in Dubinski 1999, 151-2, my translation)

A declaration regarding a possible future of "Solidarity," with explicit mention of the name, was exactly what Walesa and his colleagues had wanted and could not negotiate for a long time. Official acknowledgment that such an entity existed, even if it was still delegalized, made them a "side" in the negotiations, gave them a rhetorical position, as opposed to being simply a group of private

individuals each of whom could be arrested at any time for engaging in oppositional activity or simply ignored. The declaration opened the way for the final phase of talks leading up to the “Round Table” conference, which took place between February and April 1989.

In those talks, as in August of 1980, Walesa’s persistence and willingness to talk, combined with toughness in regard to matters of fundamental principle and pragmatism in regard to detail, were critical to the success of the talks. At one initial working meeting on January 27, 1989, Walesa insisted: “You [the government side] are not able to block freedom. It is not possible to have development without freedom” (transcript in Dubinski 1999, 185, my translation). A bit later in the same meeting, in the middle of a heated discussion of economic reform and the meaning of “socialism” in its context, Walesa, ever the pragmatist unwilling to enter into potentially distracting and divisive philosophical debates, interrupted: “I suggest my [conception of] socialism. There are three bakeries in town: a private one, a cooperative one, and a state-owned one. The one that bakes the cheapest rolls prospers best” (transcript in Dubinski 1999, 185, my translation). As usual, he had short patience with the politicians’ penchant for lofty words. In a discussion of who should speak and for how long at the final televised conclusion of the “Round Table” conference, Walesa, who insisted that the number and duration of speeches by politicians should be minimized, said: “I will say only two sentences: ‘It’s good that it is over. I hope I never step into that again’” (transcript in Dubinski 1999, 448, my translation). The colloquial expression “step into” used by Walesa means only one thing in Polish: stepping into “sh. . .” Whether Walesa intended “that” which he did not want to “step into” again to imply dealing with the regime or real socialism, which was in effect being negotiated away, is a matter of conjecture. (In the end, however, Walesa delivered a speech, some key passages of which are translated in the Appendix.)

After the Transition: Walesa as Democratic Politician

Following the Round Table conference and the watershed June 4, 1989 parliamentary elections that resulted in a dramatic defeat for the authorities and ushered in the first non-communist government and

prime minister in Central Eastern Europe, Lech Walesa was at the height of his power. Without any formal government post, the leader of “Solidarity” was the primary power broker on the political scene. It is due to his support that General Jaruzelski, the erstwhile first secretary of the communist party, military leader responsible for martial law, and virtual dictator of Poland for almost a decade became the first to occupy the office of state president revived during the Round Table negotiations. The agreement negotiated at the “Round Table” was that the office of president, provided with broad executive and veto powers based on the French and American models, would be occupied by Jaruzelski in order to provide political stability and reassure the allies (chiefly the Soviet Union) during the gradual reforms of the system. The crushing electoral victory of the opposition, the disintegration of the communist party, and the quickening pace of change in the Soviet Union itself rendered this scenario moot. Still, in spite of opposition in his own camp, Walesa stuck to the terms of the political bargain. Some of his reasons for that had to do with not wanting to immediately assume all power and thus become solely responsible for the bankrupt economy. Others were political and strategic; the situation was new and full of uncertainties. In his interview with me, Walesa explained that he was very much aware that there had been powerful opposition to change among many party stalwarts, who still occupied key political, economic, military, and security posts and who could not be changed overnight. There was strong loyalty to General Jaruzelski among the military brass. Poland was also still host to almost a million Soviet troops and surrounded by communist regimes. One had to proceed carefully.

By fall 1989, however, Walesa began to grow impatient with the slow pace of change. His hope that democratization would result in an explosion of political and economic energy was not born out. He thought that the new post-“Solidarity” power elites were becoming too much like their predecessors in monopolizing political power and slowing down the political process. At stake were two different visions of democratization. One, represented by prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Walesa’s erstwhile advisor, was of gradual transformation shepherded by a unified, broad-based political formation with as much popular support as possible, thus by a government of national unity based on “Solidarity” as its political and moral foundation. The other,

Walesa's, was of rapid political fragmentation to liberate competing energies and visions in the service of reform (one hears echoes of his metaphor of competing bakeries, where the one that bakes the cheapest rolls prospers). In a press interview in October, he announced his dissent from the policies of what in effect was a "Solidarity" government; speaking in the name of the union, Walesa said: "We will hold the government responsible not for failing to solve problems, but for not finishing the task of political pluralization, for not helping to create new political parties which could present their programs" (quoted in Majcherek 1999, 245).

At a rally on May 10, 1990, just after announcing his intention to run for the presidency against Mazowiecki, Walesa defined the issue further:

There is debate in Poland as to the meaning of democracy. For some, democracy is a steered process, it is a ship which politicians steer through the uncertain waters of political elements. For others democracy is the realm of spontaneous activity of individuals under the iron control of the law. Free societies base their existence not on social peace [a loaded term in Poland, used by the communist regime over the 1980s to restrain social unrest], but on constant political unrest. Not on silencing conflicts, but on their constant public resolution. (quoted in Skorzynski 1997, 246-7, my translation)

The last sentence echoes Walesa's principled defense of pluralism in the face of the communist fear of liberating competing voices in his debate with Miodowicz two years earlier. (In the 1990 presidential campaign that pitted Walesa against Mazowiecki, Mazowiecki's slogan was "Forward with deliberation" while Walesa's was "Acceleration.")

At a public meeting a day later, he declared: "I am for a democracy which gives individuals the opportunity for spontaneous activity within the law. I am for continual political unrest, continual public diffusion of conflict. For me, parliamentary democracy means a peaceful war of everyone with everyone" (quoted in Majcherek 1999, 165, my translation). Two days later, at a meeting of the Citizens' Committee (the political arm of "Solidarity" and the de facto governing party), he made his famous declaration of what became known as the "war at the top":

When there is peace at the top [of the political hierarchy], there is war at the bottom. Therefore, I encourage you all to warring. The present arrangement—support for the government, persuading [the people] that things cannot be better, that there is nothing to

struggle for, that the most one can do is support—is not good for the government or safe for society. (...) The point is to allow diverse ideas, conflicts, and public discussion Not to scare people, but to make people active. (quoted in Skorzynski 1997, 247, my translation)

In his interview with me, Walesa (2004) explained:

My role was not to play the great leader. I could do that but I did not want to. My task was to initiate, annoy, point out, provoke. Because I was to incite the people, over those ten years, fifteen, to get to work, to make up for the losses [caused by] lack of democracy and activeness over those fifty years [of communism]. within the concept of democracy, the free market, the people must be active, one cannot do for them. I proposed slogans, ideas, but I did not do [for them]. And the people were furious

But Walesa was the victim of his own success, or, rather, of his own rhetoric. Walesa's manner of speaking in politics and about politics over the course of his entire career, but especially during and after the transition, contributed to a changed perception of politics. In Walesa's speech (full of personal pronouns, personifications of abstract phenomena, anecdotes, and direct action verbs), politics emerges as a very personal affair; everything depends on individuals, on their motivation, good will, ability, and personal initiative. Things are fundamentally relatively simple, but manipulators and professional "politicians" make them complicated to mislead people and make a mess of things up for their own ulterior gain. However, everything can be "arranged," "fixed," "cleaned up," especially if Walesa, Mr. Fix It himself, takes charge of the matter.

Such a vision of politics was sustained—seemingly against Walesa's own inner convictions (judging by his own statements of principle)—by the "dissident" dynamics of struggle against totalitarianism, when things were black and white, "us" vs. "them," and by Walesa's own towering symbolic stature. It continued to make sense after the transition to many in a nation distrustful of abstract ideologies and unfamiliar with the complexities of democratic party politics, negotiations of conflicting interests, or having to select among differing visions and interpretations of political reality. It demystified politics and the complex forces that governed people's lives, bringing it all down to the level of a game in which the people's champion won successive rounds (first against the regime, than against whomever in

the people's best interest) while the people kibitzed from the stands. Among Walesa's metaphors, one of the most persistent had been the metaphor of politics as a game (cards, chess) or sports match (soccer, boxing). In an interview for the Italian magazine *La Stampa* in 1989, Walesa said: "If you expect me to say that I will take personal responsibility for the government, then I must answer: I will not exclude that possibility, but I will surely not do it willingly; anyway, please excuse my presumptuousness, but I consider this the final card in a difficult game" (quoted in Kurski 1993, 85). Asked in 1990 why he did not become either the president or prime minister, Walesa responded, "I did not give up the game; I merely changed positions"; then came a long explanation of the current political configuration, all couched in the language of soccer (passing balls, dribbling, setting up, scoring goals, and so on) (interview with *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1990, quoted in Kurski 1993, 87). Both of Walesa's presidential campaigns (the one he won and the one he lost) were based on game metaphors in which Walesa played as the people's champion in an implied continuity of struggle: "Let him play on" (written under a picture of Walesa), "Let's win a sovereign Poland" (both from the 1990 campaign), and "Together we will win" (1995 campaign).

Such rhetorical habits, and habits of public interpretation of political phenomena engendered by them, militated against Walesa's avowed support for pluralism and democracy. Walesa fell, perhaps, into the leadership trap: the paradoxical and futile spectacle of a leader vested with tremendous personal symbolic power asserting that power ostensibly in the interest of doing away with this particular symbolism and the resulting concentration of power, while at the same time wanting to remain a key player on the political scene. Whatever the case may be, in spite of his ostensible support for democracy and pluralism, Walesa came under increasing criticism in late 1989 and early 1990, and throughout his presidency, for harboring dictatorial tendencies. He was considered self-centered and Napoleonic ("Nobody is helping me, I fight alone, 'Solidarity'—that's me!"), paternalistic ("I gave this to Adam [Michnik] as his homework"; "I'll lay each politician across my lap [for spanking]") (all the preceding quoted in Fras 1998, 60), and dissembling (as in his perhaps most famous phrase: "I am for, and even against"). He could also be polemical and confrontational, even rude, always presumably in the interest of democracy understood

as constant dissensus and debate. At a press conference before the presidential election, Walesa challenged the press: “Did I insult anyone? I am trying to insult you on purpose, to get you to start a discussion. That is the only way we can talk things out!” (quoted in Kurski 1993, 54).

Democrat or Dictator? Walesa as President

Walesa’s presidential inauguration was anti-climactic. Unlike Nelson Mandela, another symbolic leader of an anti-totalitarian struggle become president, whose inauguration occurred after the democratic parliamentary elections and who, according to the South African tradition, became president because he represented the majority party (which gave him unquestionable political legitimacy in addition to moral stature), Walesa became president more than a year after the watershed parliamentary elections and his presidency was preceded by a brief presidency of General Jaruzelski. Mandela’s inauguration represented a symbolic moment of transition: an African was coming into supreme position of power in a country where only a short time before he could not even vote. Thus, Mandela’s ascendance to the presidency was a symbolic fulfillment of the African people’s struggle for political liberation. Fittingly, Mandela’s inaugural speech before parliament performed, according to Philippe-Joseph Salazar, the rhetorical delivery of the new nation, a founding act lifted South Africa, according to Salazar, from “plasma” into “historia” (2002, 27). Mandela’s inauguration was the beginning of the process of national healing, which formed the underlying motif of Mandela’s inaugural and became the focus of his “performative presidency” whose rhetorical/political project was, in Salazar’s words, “to perform the nation in a way that makes her appear to herself united yet diverse” (2002, 31).

In Poland, however, the exact moment of founding of the new democratic Third Republic, as well as the very recognition of such an entity, were under political contestation. Extremists on the right argued that the “new” nation had no moral legitimacy, because it was the result of a “sellout.” Many on the left argued for political continuity between the communist “People’s Poland” and the new

republic, defending the humanistic and social “achievements” of the former and pointing to the comparative shortcomings of the latter. For most ordinary Poles, the symbolic rhetorical caesura between the old and the new was the expose of Tadeusz Mazowiecki on September 12, 1989, with its leading theme of a “new time” and the famous image of the “thick line” separating the past from the future.

Thus, when Walesa claimed in the opening of his short inaugural address that the moment marked the “solemn beginning of the Third Republic,” the claim rang hollow and self-serving, underscoring Walesa’s tendency to identify his political biography with national history. In his address, Walesa also said: “I come from a peasant family, for many years I was a worker. I will never forget from where I started on the road that led me to the highest office in the state. I wish that through the fact of my elevation all Polish workers, all peasants, felt more as co-hosts in our fatherland.” In political terms, Walesa’s inauguration marked not the end of the struggle for democracy in Poland, but the beginning of the struggle’s new phase, in which the rhetorical project of his presidency became a populist partisanship for his own conception of the political compact. (The entire inaugural address is translated in the Appendix.)

Stephen Skowronek has suggested that a successful president’s performance entails a paradox: presidents must disrupt preexisting order while affirming the value of order and creating a new one. By this criterion, Walesa’s performance as president was not successful.

Political transformation, especially in its initial phase, is a time when symbolic reality often outstrips legislative and physical actuality. Walesa’s words, by virtue of his symbolic stature, wielded considerable rhetorical power in the public arena; they also wielded formal rhetorical power by virtue of his presidential office. There was potential for conflict between the two kinds and channels of power (especially in a context of legislative fluidity and where the lines of separation between powers are not yet clearly drawn), and conflict—with parliament, government, and a succession of prime ministers—became the hallmark of Walesa’s presidency. (Mandela, by the way, avoided this potential problem by remaining above the political fray and speaking out in broad generalities and sticking to his initial vision of the country, while leaving the Deputy President to run the daily grind of the presidency.)

In the context of the underlying conception of democracy as a “peaceful war of everyone with everyone” and of democratic consolidation as “struggle”—political struggle as well as struggle against “commies,” privateers, and crooks—Walesa’s conception of the presidency was that of a popular leader, beyond political divisions, who on behalf of the people and in the people’s interest oversees the functioning of government and intervenes to balance the political forces: both “president with an ax” and the “great swing master,” as the media had dubbed him (transcript of presidential debate with Kwasniewski, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Nov. 13, 1995, 23). “For today, when we are changing the system,” Walesa declared in an interview five months before his election, “we need a president with an ax: decisive, sharp, straight, does not mess around, does not disturb democracy, but instantly plugs up holes. When he sees someone taking advantage of the change of system, stealing, he passes a decree, valid until parliamentary legislation” (interview in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 20, 1990, quoted in Chwalba 2000, 811). One of Walesa campaign ads was a television cartoon featuring a sympathetic-looking anthropomorphic ax swishing around and hacking at red spiders, breaking up their spider webs, and chasing all manner of bad characters.

The conflict between Walesa’s status as national symbol and president took most visible forms when Walesa attempted to coerce legislative action through rhetorical *fait accompli*. For example, at the inaugural meeting of the State Security Council, president Walesa began his speech by announcing: “We are gathered today at the inaugural meeting of the State Security Council. That is the name we would like to give to the Committee for the Defense of the Country [the communist-era name of the organization]. Of course, that demands a change in the Constitution.” (Speech at the inaugural meeting of the State Security Council, Feb. 13, 1991, reprinted in Walesa 1995, 17). Note that Walesa used a rhetorical performative in place of the, still to come, appropriate legislative act; the organization president Walesa is presumably inaugurating is still merely his wish and has no legal status. Performatives do have their place in politics, but in this particular instance the context was not valid. Walesa was trying to influence specific provisions in the new constitution, which at the time was under development.

It may be argued that Walesa became a “rhetorical president” in Jeffrey Tulis’s sense: going over the heads of the legislature directly to the voters to use the persuasive powers of the presidency to affect change. But Walesa went not only over the heads of the legislature but also behind its back, as well as behind the people’s back when it suited his purposes. He used his symbolic capital and the resources of the presidential office to develop an independent shadow “government” of his own, made up of stalwart old time followers and new converts. Walesa defended his actions by arguing that change was happening too slowly, that the “reds,” criminals, and other alien elements were highjacking the new democracy for their own purposes, and that “democracy” itself needed strong executive intervention and protection.

In some respects, Walesa was not unlike Woodrow Wilson, who chafed at the constitutional separation of powers and believed that the presidential office was one of popular leadership, with the president’s “primary duty to articulate public sentiment” (Thurow 23).** Like Wilson, Walesa believed that he had the innate ability to know what people think. He saw himself as the voice of the common people (not of the intelligencia and the elites, who by that time resented his uncouth ways and folksy speech), of people who resented elites of all kinds, who distrusted power and “systems” as such, who still saw the world as divided between the (always apparently) powerful “them” and the (always apparently) powerless “us.” To these people, Walesa presented himself as the man who had successfully “shown” the communist “them” and who will continue to “show” the new “them” (whoever they may be) that they are not all powerful. To these people, Walesa presented himself as being above politics by using such expressions as “I told the politicians . . . ,” (interview in *Wprost* 20, May 16, 1996, 17), even as he was deeply and with gusto embroiled in politics. In his public rhetoric as president, Walesa presented himself as, alternately, the voice of the nation, the guardian of its interests, and the nation’s shepherd and controller, who can invoke the voice or action and curb or release the anger of “the nation” or “the people.” At a press conference in 1993, just before parliamentary elections, Walesa shouted at a reporter: “It is I who fight for democracy. I know what the nation is saying.” He declared that if a post-communist government ever came to power, “[t]he entire nation will howl, the entire nation [will come] out on the street in one minute. . . . I will need to prevent that. I want to

serve the nation and defend it from the cataclysm that threatens it” (“My BBWR is fantastic,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 15, 1993, 1). Wilson, however, functioned within a stable political framework that limited the potential for abuse of power. Walesa had no such framework; it was only developing and Walesa was a major factor in this development.

Walesa (2002) later explained that he viewed the Polish transformation

in three stages, the first being ‘Solidarity’ against the Reds; ‘Solidarity’ as a weapon against the regime. Once we arrived at station Freedom, we had to break its [‘Solidarity’s’] monopoly. We could have been vindictive, worse than the communists, and that is why I felt factionalism was a natural outcome, and I even helped in the break up. My stages consisted of unity, fragmentation, followed by intelligent grassroots rebuilding. In the first two stages, I was effective. At rebuilding from the grassroots, well, it’s a daunting task, especially for one who contributed to the break up.

Some have suggested that the demands of the office were too much for Walesa’s natural talents and training. Arkadiusz Rybicki, Walesa’s one-time secretary and biographer, has suggested that

Walesa’s political endeavors preceding and following his becoming president must be viewed separately. In the first instance he deserved the appellation of national hero. In the second, he is notable for confusion and indecisiveness in handling the power he had won. Walesa does not have the basic knowledge of who he is and how a nation functions. . . . The man who would be president must have been the leader of an organization, an organization defined in the strict sense. Solidarity was not such an organization—it was a social movement. (quoted in Kurski 1993, 107)

Whatever the other reasons for Walesa’s waning effectiveness and popularity, his speech was beginning to lose its magic, too. Walesa’s folksy ways, idiosyncrasies, grammatical and stylistic infelicities, and focus on the self, so powerful as parts of his ethos against the background of impersonal, formulaic communist rhetoric, appeared awkward, embarrassing, and simply self-centered in a president of a major European democratic nation with aspirations for memberships in NATO and the European Union. According to one long-time political associate, Walesa “suffer[ed] from a nearly pathological self-love. The words he use[d] most often [were] I or *the president*. After a while ‘I

accomplished,' 'I predicted,' 'I warned,' bec[a]me unbearable” ” (Jaroslaw Kaczynski, quoted in Kurski 1993, 113, emphases in the original). Whether the imputation of self-love is correct or not, Walesa indeed appeared to abuse the first-person singular pronoun. In an interview shortly after his final presidential debate with Kwasniewski, Walesa declared: “I fix things that need fixing by the president. . . . I negotiated the pact [with Russia], I led out the Russian armies, I fixed everything” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, Nov. 13, 1995, 22).

Walesa remained at his best in front of a crowd, especially a sympathetic crowd. In an election meeting with steel workers before the second debate with Kwasniewski, Walesa kept the crowd in stitches. “I wanted to knock him out,” he said in reference to his first debate with Kwasniewski, “but the rounds were too short. As soon as I set him up—bell.” (“Utrzymalismy Polske,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Nov. 15, 1995, 4). At the same meeting he declared: “For your work and my activities I have more decorations than Brezniev. The entire front, and so many in the back that I cannot stand up” (“Utrzymalismy Polske,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Nov. 15, 1995, 4). To many voters, however, such statements sounded not innovative, fresh, and honest, but uncouth, primitive, and inappropriate. According to one close observer of Walesa’s career,

[m]any Poles seemed to expect that, once elected, Walesa would miraculously turn from a rough-edged electrician and union leader to a dignified statesman, with noble manners, speaking flawless Polish. This transformation could not take place, of course, and the symbolic function of the presidency seemed undermined by Walesa’s slips of the tongue and conduct. (Jasiewicz 1997, 156)

As president, Walesa once admitted, with characteristic openness: “There was never a situation that would surprise me, I am conceited and a buffoon, that is how I am and will be” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 5, 1995, quoted in Kaminska-Szmaj 152).**

In 1995, Walesa lost the reelection to the post-communist candidate Aleksander Kwasniewski (a former high-ranking functionary of the communist party and Walesa’s adversary at the “Round Table” negotiations), an articulate, polite Eurocrat in a blue business shirt and Pierre Cardin suit who, like American presidents, liked to be photographed with his family around the hearth or on walks with his dog. Kwasniewski ran on the platform of “Choose the future” and

“You cannot go forward with your head turned back” and his electoral propaganda emphasized his “normalcy,” in contrast to the implied abnormality of Walesa’s presidency. One of Kwasniewski’s election flyers proclaimed: “We need stability and normalcy. I ask you for your support in the election. I will repay you with a normal presidency, which will not disappoint your expectations” (quoted in Kaminska-Szmaj 166).

In the final televised debate between the two November 12, 1995, “the tense, incoherent, and rude Walesa wasn’t even a shadow of himself of yesteryear, in contrast to the relaxed, focused, and seemingly conciliatory Kwasniewski” (Jasiewicz 1997, 159). The recurring theme of Walesa’s disjointed non-sequiturs and rambling monologues was “Only I, Walesa, can save the country from a return to communism” (Jasiewicz 1997, 160). By contrast, Kwasniewski represented “a very well designed image of a civilized politician of the end of the 20th century” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, Nov. 3, 1995, quoted in Kaminska-Szmaj 157).** “For normal times one needs a normal president, not a symbol,” a commentator suggested. “Today, Walesa’s shadow obscures democracy” (Z. Siematkowski, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Nov. 16, 1995, quoted in Kaminska-Szmaj 166).** In a statement that seemed to proclaim the end of an era, Adam Michnik, former dissident one of Walesa’s closest allies in “Solidarity” days, now editor of new Poland’s major daily, announced: “The time of the Great Electrician is over” (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, Nov. 21, 1995, quoted in Kaminska-Szmaj 223).**

Conclusion

The phenomenon of Lech Walesa presents a case study in and poses questions concerning the working of rhetoric in history, of history in rhetoric, as well as rhetorical agency. The rise of communism was, after all, to an extent a result of persuasion, just as the regime was sustained, up to a point, through rhetoric (although it arrived in Poland with the tanks of the Red Army). In turn, Walesa’s rhetorical power, especially the power of his ethos, was also to an extent the product of propaganda that proclaimed the political ascendancy of his kind and called out to them: “Proletarians of all countries, unite.”

In a provocative, although largely forgotten, essay written in 1981, Lech Badkowski, one of the participants of the August 1980 strike and

founding members of the Interfactory Strike Committee, makes a provocative claim that the phenomenon of Lech Walesa was a historical accident, a product of circumstances. “There was nothing in his [Walesa’s] words,” he recalls,

that would rouse the people, reveal something new, or inspire them to action. I listened and observed without being affected because these speeches contained slogans and phrases already well known and used turns of speech designed for wide acceptance—sometimes in the style of stage actors—and the listeners swallowed every word and gesture and replied with joy, emotion, delight. It was surely because he spoke simply, in their language, as any of them would speak, but just a little better. It worked because over the years they had heard too much dead and swollen language and now were finally hearing common, everyday human speech containing its share of linguistic errors. For them, it was revealing because it was not a bureaucrat but their own leader speaking, one from their own ranks and of their own choosing. (1990, 111, my translation)

While Badkowski admits that Walesa possessed charisma, he points out (echoing the ancient criticisms of rhetoric and the Sophists) that charisma is a dangerous factor because it may be faked or manipulated. However, in what might be considered an interesting twist on the Platonic critique of rhetoric for the age of mass media and superpower politics, Badkowski suggests that “it cannot be excluded, . . . that Walesa’s great success in part or as a whole was based . . . on appearances, delusions, and wishful thinking,” that the Walesa phenomenon was, to a large extent, a historical accident, a creation of Western media combined with the internal Polish political situation, the hunger for “spiritual leadership,” and international tensions (1990, 112, my translation). Because of the historic significance and symbolism of Gdansk, the towering background presence of the Polish Pope, and the tense international situation, the eyes of the entire country and the world were turned on Gdansk when the strike began, reporters crowded in (Badkowski points out that reporters were not allowed into the other striking shipyards), and a myth was created almost overnight. Badkowski asserts that his suggestion is not meant as a criticism of Walesa or his historic contributions. “I was speaking about,” he clarifies,

the historical accident. Walesa did not prepare himself for his influential role. . . . This was what chance, fate, history, necessity—or providence, if you prefer—has wrought. .

. . . ‘the hunger for moral leadership’ has given him the role of ‘the little corporal’ in Polish society. . . . Lech Walesa is a historical accident, a case of history playing tricks with us. (1990, 113, my translation)

If one accepts Badkowski’s premises, it is then possible, just possible, that the Polish revolution, a fundamentally rhetorical revolution, could have (theoretically at least) been a provocation gone out of control, a historical accident whose implications for history are now becoming clear but whose implications for rhetorical theory and agency remain to be explored.

Whether Lech Walesa is a natural political genius or a “historical accident” that waited to happen, the rhetorical phenomenon of Lech Walesa gives hope to those of us who sometimes feel that our individual voice means nothing, even in a democracy, that the world has gotten just too complicated, too impersonal, too institutionalized, too dominated by powerful interests and organized propaganda machines for our little voices to ever be heard or heeded. Perhaps, after all, at the right moment a single voice, for whatever reasons and by whatever complex combination of circumstances (which constitute the historical specificity, and ultimate mystery, of *kairos*, and perhaps of agency as well), may have the power to change the world. Walesa’s facetious comment “I leaped over a wall and they made me president” captures some of the hope, the mystery, and the continuing potential of rhetoric in a complex world.

Transitions are, after all, the time of outsiders. In systems where there is no official, legal opposition, oppositional activists are by definition not professional politicians; they are often, in fact, amateurs, who, in a *kairotic* moment, “spoke up”—like Lech Walesa—to change history, until the moment passes, history uses them up, and they return to the ordinary life from which they came or disappear into obscurity. Lech Walesa returned to the shipyard to get his old job back. His justification? He was an electrician, he said, and his job was to fix things. When he realized the country needed fixing, he fixed it, and now, his job done, he wanted to return to fixing electric motors. Fortunately, his application was turned down and he was persuaded to desist from further attempts. Vaclav Havel also quit the presidency one fine day, disgusted by the split of Czechoslovakia and the failure of his attempt to infuse politics with

ethics. He just changed his clothes and walked away down the street. You may have seen the famous photograph of Havel strolling down the street in Prague, his jacket thrown over his shoulder, an uncertain-looking security agent trailing dejectedly a few yards behind.

Notes

1. Lech Walesa (2002).

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APPENDIX

SELECTED SPEECHES OF LECH WALESZA

*Opening Statement at the “Round Table” Conference, Feb. 6, 1989, Selected
Fragments*

. . . Our meeting is a special event, on which much depends. We begin our conference in the glare of the spotlights, but outside the windows there is sadness and fear of poverty. We utter solemn words, but Poland now needs facts, needs courageous decisions and wise, energetic action. Over the forty years [of People’s Poland] words flowed. And what came of that?

Therefore, right at the outset of our work, I want to say: we are to talk not only with each other, but also with all whom our voice reaches and will continue to reach. After a whole day of work, running around stores, and many hours of standing in lines, after anxious counting how much money is left and how to last until the end of the month – one does not want to listen to speeches and one no longer trusts in words. And how many young people are there still who do not have a place to live and enter life without a shred of hope.

All Poles will call us to account for every word and every decision. And [for] lack of decision—as well. After several months of difficult preparations—akin to breaking ice – we have finally reached the [point of] meeting at the “round table.” We come for afar, one side and the other. The road ahead is long and bumpy. The result of our work—uncertain. At this table we are to agree—as much as that is possible—in regard to the most important issues facing the country. First, however, we must understand each other. Because agreement can only be reached on the basis of truth, thus without obscuring the differences and divisions between us. In the face of the catastrophe facing the country, the instinct of self-preservation demands that we seek that which connects Poles. Poland must be raised from inertia and Poles from the feeling of hopelessness. Therefore, it is necessary to seek agreement in the interest of reconstruction. The time of political or social monopoly is coming to an end. We need a reconstruction that will make a state of [meaning: belonging to] one party into a state of [meaning: belonging to] the nation and the people. And a reconstruction that will give the people back the certainty that with honest labor they can ensure a decent life for themselves and their family. The future of the country depends on whether we open the way to that.

Before our very eyes, Europe and the world are developing quickly. We watch modernity in foreign films and in the windows of foreign-currency stores. We work

in old factory workshops by disintegrating machinery. There is a lack of materials, a lack of tools, a lack of ideas. It is difficult to feed a family, still more difficult to clothe it, and keeping it healthy [medical care] is not easy either. Those who are to heal us and those who teach our children live in degrading poverty. The water is poisoned, the ground is poisoned, the air is poisoned [the word order in Polish is more dramatic: “poisoned is the water, etc.”]. Let no one put the blame on Polish workers, farmers, or intelligentsia. As the world is long and wide, Poles are working well, conscientiously, and efficiently. They are building bridges and hospitals in foreign countries. They make inventions. They produce excellent tape recorders and outstanding computers. Why would they work badly in their own country. The truth is this: that our effort was and is wasted. That work is badly paid. That nothing happens normally. It is the result of a bad system. The result of lack of freedom. We still feel on our backs the breath of Stalin. This can no longer continue. It must change. So that it becomes possible to live in Poland. So that Poles begin to feel like masters of the house [the word ‘gospodarz’ used by Walesa is difficult to render in English; it connotes at once master of the house, husbandman, freeholder, and steward] in their own country. So that our youth does not have to escape from its fatherland. So that they [our youth] do not treat her [Poland] like an evil stepmother. So that farmers do not leave their soil. And so that workers do not feel like hirelings. That is easy to say. It’s harder to do. But in spite of all one must try. It is precisely about that that we are here to deliberate, about that [that we are here] to decide. . . . I say this not only as a signatory of the Gdansk Accords and the leader of an independent labor union, but also as a citizen of this country and an electrician from the Gdansk shipyard. In my own experiences there have been numerous moments of hope as well as moments of bitterness.

I have often heard promises of a bright future or the calls “Help.” [Reference to the famous speech by Edward Gierek, newly appointed first party secretary, who in a speech following the Baltic Coast riots in December 1970 asked shipyard workers whether they would help him get Poland out of the crisis.]** I no longer want to believe words. We must have our own union, out of our will and our need, which will defend the interests of working people and will serve only one mistress—Poland. It is our major—perhaps only—guarantee for the future. A wise union never encloses itself in group egotism, has an awareness of responsibility for the common good, gives a sense of empowerment and hope. Such a union does not threaten anyone. . . .

. . . There is only one direction. It must lead toward democracy, toward the rule of law, toward national sovereignty, towards civic freedom. Even if that cannot happen all at once, still one must begin somewhere.

One must begin in three areas: first—in law and the judiciary, so that the courts become truly independent and just; second—in the mass media, which right now are almost wholly under the rule of one party; third—at the local level, starting from the bottom, one must restore authentic territorial self-government.

In saying all that, do we demand too much? We know—the country is ruined. But it is not dwarves that ruined it, but the system of power, which expropriates citizens from their rights and wastes the fruit of their labor. Today everybody talks about our common responsibility for how to get out of this situation and what kind

of Poland we create [reference to government propaganda's efforts to spread the blame for economic problems to the opposition under the cover of seemingly conciliatory and good-will slogans of "common" this and "common" that]. But let those who talk that way today remember for the future, that the law of life is that there is only as much co-responsibility as there is co-participation. [Reference to the government's propaganda slogan "There is no freedom without responsibility," which implied, among other things, that since the opposition was presumably not willing to assume responsibility for the country's problems, it had no right to talk about freedom and legitimacy.]

We want "Solidarity" not for itself, but for the people and for Poland. We must pass above the bad experiences of the past years, prevail over hurts and overcome hate. But on this day, on which we are finally allowed to speak about this openly, we cannot forget the people who died, about the years of suffering and anguish, about the years when we were being humiliated and our hopes were being taken away. We do not present an account for that, but the wrongs must be righted. . . .

We enter these talks with faith—because we will talk about Poland, Poles, "Solidarity," about issues and problems that unite us, and those that divide us.

I believe that he who gives faith will help us, because the cause is good.

(Source: Dubinski 1999, 221-24, text collated with tape recording of the proceedings from Polish state television; my translation)

*Closing Statement at the "Round Table" Conference, April 5, 1989, Selected
Fragments*

"There is no freedom without 'Solidarity'" [the chief "Solidarity" slogan through the 1980s]—that is the truth with which we came to the 'round table.'

In my speech at the opening of the deliberations I talked about how ruined our country was and how hard people's lives [were]. I said that it is not dwarves who are responsible, but a system which we have not chosen for ourselves. At the 'round table' we met the people of that system and we realized that they are aware of this fact. In beginning talks with us, in allowing our uncensored statements on television, they gave evidence of readiness for a radical change of the system. After all, its foundation—which I have repeated many times—is monopoly. And the very facts of the talks breaks this monopoly.

Nine weeks of talks about the most important issues of our fatherland convinced us that in the situation in which we find ourselves there can no longer be talk of a bargain between different sides, but only of a great risk, which all undertake who feel responsible for Poland. Either we are capable, as a nation, of building—in a peaceful way—a Poland independent, sovereign, safe through equal treaties, or we will drown in chaos, demagoguery, and, as a result, in civil war, in which there will be no victors.

In speaking of independent Poland I quoted a fragment from the political agreement arrived at the "round table." The fact that we can today, with people of

the government, write words that up until now one could read only in the underground press, awakens hope.

It [the hope] is, however, accompanied by fear that our agreement may be limited only to grandiose words. Our anxiety should not be surprising, we came to this table from prisons, from under the truncheons of ZOMO [special riot-control police units], with living memory of those who shed their blood for “Solidarity.” And that is only a fragment of the history of the last forty-five years. Full of beautiful words, behind which were hidden perfidy, violence, and the helplessness of the nation.

That is why, in all the subcommittees of the ‘round table’ [during the 6-week-long negotiations, each major issue was dealt with by a separate subcommittee, called a “little table,” composed of representatives of both sides], we insisted on concrete steps that can be put into effect immediately, such as legalization of “Solidarity,” Farmers’ “Solidarity,” [and] the Independent Association of Students. Those postulates were accepted by the government side. With that, we have reached the necessary minimum to enter on the path of democratic change. . . .

“Solidarity” has always proclaimed the necessity for civic responsibility for the fate of the country. In this way, we find a common language with political opposition groups, social milieus, and organizations, in this way we deliberate on the mending of the Republic [Walesa here refers to the title of a well-known 18th-century Polish political treatise “On the Mending of the Republic,” one of the foundational historical documents of the modern Polish state, similar in status of the *Federalist Papers* in the U.S.]. But I must also say that for those to whom I speak today and in whose name I speak, freedom goes together with bread. [Walesa here echoes Pope John Paul II’s famous words spoken in Gdansk, in fact in Walesa’s own neighborhood, in 1987, in which the Pope said: “I speak to you and for you.”] We are changing political structures so that my Gdansk shipyard—and with it thousands of mines, steel mills, and factories—could live with advantage to the country, so that the worker or the peasant, the member of the intelligentsia or a retiree, could live in dignity and without the humiliating fear of poverty. We want a normal life. This is the goal reforms must serve. . . .

We are aware that the “round table” deliberations did not meet all expectations, could not have met them. I have to emphasize, however, that for the first time we have talked with each other using the power of arguments, not the arguments of power. That bodes for the future. I am of the opinion that the “round table” deliberations may become the beginning of the path toward a democratic and free Poland.

Hence, we look into the future with courage and hope. [Because] We believe in the words we placed on the Gdansk monument [a monument outside the Gdansk shipyard in memory of the workers killed in the 1970 Baltic Coast riots, erected in the wake of the “Gdansk Accords” of August 31, 1980]: “The Lord will give strength to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.” [These words of Psalm 29:11 (English translation according to the King James version, which uses the future tense also used in Polish; the New International Version uses the present tense) were spoken by Pope John Paul II during his first 1979 visit to Poland, the visit widely credited with providing the impulse for the social and moral energy that

found its outlet in “Solidarity.” The words are often interpreted as the Pope’s tacit encouragement to, blessing for, and prophecy of, the bloodless revolution that followed. Interestingly, Walesa also quoted the same words at the end of his Nobel Peace Prize speech, delivered in his absence by his wife Danuta, on December 11, 1983.]**

(Source: Dubinski 1999, 474-476, text collated with tape recording of the proceedings from Polish state television; my translation)

Walesa’s Presidential Inaugural Delivered to the National Assembly of Poland in Warsaw on December 22, 1990.

Gentlemen Speakers!
Gentlemen Members of Parliament and Senators!
Compatriots at home and abroad!

I stand before you as the first president of Poland elected directly by the whole nation [or “the people,” since the Polish word “narod” used by Walesa means both]. This moment marks the solemn beginning of the Third Republic. Nobody and nothing can diminish this fact. The bad period is ending, when the rulers of our country were selected under the pressure of strangers or as a result of forced compromises [reference to the “Round Table” agreement, as a result of which General Jaruzelski became the first president of Poland after World War 2, preceding Walesa]. Today, we take a major step on the long and bloody road toward the rebuilding of our independence [reference to those who died fighting the Nazi and then Soviet domination and in subsequent struggles, including “Solidarity”]. Providence has granted us the privilege of peaceful fulfillment of the testament of past generations.

Independent Poland desires to be an element of peaceful order in Europe. [It] wants to be a good neighbor. Centuries of common history connect us with the Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. This applies also to Germany, in which we want to see a friendly gate to Europe. While we are spiritually connected to the West, we want to simultaneously build a spirit of sympathy and cooperation in our relations with Russia. At the same time, we are aware that only reformed and economically strong Poland can be an equal partner to others.

Gentlemen Members of Parliament and Senators!

During Your busy term Poland has achieved much [reference to the first semi-democratic parliament of 1989-1991, the busiest parliament on record, which passed legislation fundamentally changing the political and economic character of the country]. Today, the nation expects from us still more—changes in economic policy and system of government. The attitude of millions among the electorate in this regard was unanimous. Our reforms must proceed faster and more efficiently, with thought not only of numbers but first of all of people. We must remodel the structure of the state. Decentralize it in such a way that the greatest possible number

of decisions are taken at the bottom. There where people live and know their problems. It is a great legislative and financial task.

An equally great task is universal privatization. Poland should become a nation of owners. Everybody can become the owner of a piece of the national substance, of a piece of our fatherland. That is the simplest, most tested road to responsibility. Only in this way will we multiply our goods and learn good husbandry. . . .

Today, we make a major step on the road to democracy in our fatherland. The president elected by the people is obliged to serve the people again, Walesa uses the word “narod,” which covers both “the people” and “the nation”. The same [applies to] the future parliament [reference to the upcoming first completely democratic parliamentary elections]. State authorities must remember that the people’s [or “the nation’s] trust has to be earned every day.

Together let us make certain that the government and its ministers listen more closely to the voice of the people [or “the nation”]. The last election made everyone aware that nobody is given a credit of trust forever [reference to the presidential election, in which Walesa narrowly defeated Stan Tyminski, a complete unknown from Peru].

I come from a peasant family, for many years I was a worker. I will never forget where I started from on the way that has led me to the highest office in the state. I would like the fact of my elevation to make all Polish workers, all peasants, feel more like co-masters [the traditional Polish word “gospodarz” used by Walesa means master of the house, husbandman, freeholder] in our fatherland.

We must again come to believe in our powers. We have a good deal of them, but we do not always know how to take advantage of them. Too often we doubt our possibilities. Passivity and discouragement—these are the greatest obstacles on the road toward the prosperity for Poles. When we get to work with faith, the most developed countries will also trust us more.

Ladies and Gentlemen! Dear Compatriots!

Europe without Christianity would not be itself. Similarly Poland, which upon entering Europe does not want to forego its roots. Therefore, immediately after my election as president, I went to Jasna Gora [monastery, considered the spiritual center of Polish Catholicism and, for many, also of patriotism], to the spiritual capital of our nation [or “our people”], in order to swear allegiance to the Republic there. [In order] To get strength from there to fulfill my mission.

I believe that the Lord will give strength to his people.

The Lord will give his people the blessing of peace. [As in his speech at the conclusion of the “Round Table” negotiations, Walesa closes by quoting the words spoken by Pope John Paul II during his first 1979 visit to Poland]**

(Source: Walesa 1995, 9-10).