

COMMANDING HEIGHTS

Lech Walesa

1

Trained as an electrician, Lech Walesa assumed leadership of the independent trade union Solidarity and played a key role in leading Poland out of Soviet domination. Walesa won the Polish presidency in 1990 and held it until 1995.

In this interview, Walesa describes the Polish struggle to come out from under Soviet domination, the factors that aided him, and his enduring faith in the triumph of freedom in Poland.

Margaret Thatcher's Visit with Lech Walesa

INTERVIEWER: We interviewed Margaret Thatcher and her officials, and she told us that when she came to Gdansk, she met you. It was the high point of her entire time in office. I was wondering if you could tell us your memory of her visit, how you first met her, and where you took her around Gdansk.

LECH WALESKA: I am pleased that Mrs. Thatcher speaks like that of our meeting. However, I am unable to remember much of the meetings. My character and personality is today and tomorrow; I do not work well remembering further back. However, I can say that in that time, during the period of martial law, because [her visit] was during that time, we were concerned that the great people of this world know what we were doing [and] why we were doing it, so that they would know what we were aiming for, our plans, perspectives, and also so that they would know that we would not give in. So we convinced them and Mrs. Thatcher, who is a different type of politician. Mrs. Thatcher, the prime minister at that time, was very well prepared for all the meetings. First of all, there was a delegation which asked which topics we would be covering, something was agreed. However, everything else which was covered at the meeting was not binding. So this was something new in my career as a politician. I said that the most important thing for us was that we were understood and that we were noticed, and that role was fulfilled.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that at the time you were still under house arrest? Why do you think that the secret police and the Communist government allowed you to meet with Mrs. Thatcher?

COMMANDING HEIGHTS

Lech Walesa

2

LECH WALESZA: I did not check it precisely, but I think that Mrs. Thatcher well understood what was happening here. She felt that new times were approaching and was certainly in solidarity with these new times. That is probably why, I don't know this, but she made it a condition of her talks that she talked with others, me among them. That is what I presume, because otherwise the authorities would not have allowed this meeting to take place. However, they did allow it.

INTERVIEWER: She told us that she was waiting in the hotel where the police took her. She did not know that you were going to be coming, and the police and you opened the door and looked in. The door closed, and after a while you entered the room with someone. Do you remember that and what you said when you first met her, what your first impressions were?

LECH WALESZA: No, no, I do not remember that event, but it must have been very comical if it was like that. But it may have been totally different. It could have been my double, because the secret police carried out such deeds. I do not remember this event; I would not have backed away. Something is wrong, something is wrong. I certainly would not have done that—opened the door, [seen] Mrs. Thatcher, and walked out. That is not possible. Something is not right. I certainly would have remembered that. Presumably the secret police were up to something here. Maybe there were two meetings with me, with someone closely resembling me, because the secret police had someone very similar looking to myself.

INTERVIEWER: The secret police had a double? Really? That's amazing!

LECH WALESZA: Yes, but probable, very probable indeed, because I would have remembered, there is no point in denying it, this comical situation. I do not remember it, so something is very suspicious here.

INTERVIEWER: She said that when you met with her and Father Jankowski at the church, that was very moving, and people were lighting candles and singing the national hymn. Why do you think that other members of Solidarity were so moved by her visit? What did she represent?

LECH WALESZA: I must say that without that meeting with us, with me, without this visit of Mrs. Thatcher's, it would have been very difficult to do anything at all, and I don't even know if we would have won. Thus it was, among other things, that this visit was the link in our whole chain carrying us to our victory. Without one link there is no chain. Mrs. Thatcher is a big link, and she certainly, if we were to count it up, helped us very much in our struggle. But how can one calculate it? That is very difficult, but it is necessary to remember that without this visit there would be no chain leading to victory.

INTERVIEWER: Why was it such a link, such a nucleus?

LECH WALESZA: You cannot say a nucleus, but an important chain. There is no chain without a link. Mrs. Thatcher was highly respected in Europe at that time and in the world and also in Poland. You did not refuse Mrs. Thatcher. Nobody refused her; therefore noticing us, forcing a meeting with others and me was a very important thing. However, as I have already said, it is impossible to count or calculate this into percentages. It is like [this]: I presume that you, just like us, do not ponder about the fact where the bones of your four-times great-great-great-grandfather lie buried, but without him you would not be here. I would not be here if it wasn't for those five-times great-great-grandfathers. He was so important for you to be here, but do you think about it? No. The same here. There would not have been a victory if it were not for this meeting, because there would be a pause, greater difficulties, or our destruction. But as I say, to calculate this is not possible today; however, it cannot be forgotten.

Poland's Struggle Against Soviet Domination

INTERVIEWER: I think that sometimes people outside of Poland, [people in] America, England, forget how difficult it was here for you and for your workers. What was life like at that time in terms of ordinary people finding enough food to eat, in terms of the oppression, in terms of the potential threat from the Soviets?

LECH WALESZA: It is a simple question, but the answer is at least a three-hour film. For Americans to understand it should perhaps be necessary to record 10 hours. I will try to answer it in a few minutes. After the second world war, the Allies, including the United States, betrayed us, and we were handed over to Soviet domination against our will. We had a system enforced onto us. We were too weak to defend ourselves because we had been bled

COMMANDING HEIGHTS

Lech Walesa

4

white, but we did not accept it. We continuously tried to rid ourselves of the Communist yoke and Soviet domination. In the '40s immediately after the betrayal and in the '50s with weapons in our hands, we tried to free ourselves from the handcuffs clapped on us in Yalta. We did not succeed. In the '60s and '70s we demonstrated on the streets. Students, workers, we carried on losing.

In the '70s and early '80s we held strikes and came out onto the streets. This also resulted in bloodshed, but on the basis of trial and error we improved our struggle. The next step was striking and remaining in workplaces in the institutions, which was difficult for the opposition in firing at us or fighting with us. This method proved to be effective, but in our dreams we had the next method of battle, a Central Eastern European Solidarity. If we had lost with this Solidarity, there were talks with President Havel [president of Czechoslovakia from the late '80s to '90s] and others, and we would have risked it in five, 10 years' time, the next battle, [which would have been] harder, bigger than this one. We succeeded, except that somebody will say, "Why did you fight? Such a poor country, so why with strikes?" The world did not understand. We were responsible for Poland, for Europe, for the world. And we knew that in Poland there are about 250,000 Soviet soldiers stationed from the war and [in the countries] around Poland there are about one million Soviet soldiers. They have silos housing nuclear weapons. That is why we could not fight differently, only in this responsible, decisive way. This proved to be successful, and in consequence proved to be a blessing.

As far as the principles of the communist system go, I do not want to go on about it, but it was hegemony, slavery, and domination. As for a physical approach to us, many spies and an absurd system which relied on the fact that ownership was almost totally with the masses, with everyone, which meant with nobody. Where there is a poor manager, there is poor management. Many things took place here and helped us in our victory, but primarily we must not forget that the communist system was becoming more and more inefficient. It hindered development more and more. At that time in the '80s, videos were introduced, satellite television, mobile telephones. With these, the system, if it wanted to maintain censorship [and the] stupidity of the people, the political police with all its equipment would have had to have been multiplied three or four times, at least. However, it was so much in debt, [and] the West did not want to lend any more, so the system was failing. That is why it was easier for us to beat it. However, it could have lasted a while yet, for as we know it is still in place in Cuba and

in Korea. So it could have lasted a bit longer, but it was more and more inefficient and everybody, even the Communists, were aware of it.

INTERVIEWER: The Soviets and the Communists said that they were representing the workers. Did you ever in your entire career believe that?

LECH WALESZA: You are touching on the philosophy of maintaining power and how it happened, how victory came about. Is this what you are leading to? I can tell you this: In the '70s and '80s I held talks among others with Mrs. Thatcher, but in fact with all the great people of this world who mattered—presidents, prime ministers, chancellors, and even kings—I must tell you that no one, I did not meet one of these important people who would believe that communism would end in the 20th century. Not one person believed in this possibility. And [the idea] that we would defeat the communist system, as I said, in a peaceful way, I saw smiles. This was not a serious concept, because of course it was known that the communist system murdered, as a low estimate, approximately over 200 million. I am correct, 200 million human lives, at a low approximation. So defeating it in a peaceful manner was not something acceptable to the great political minds of that time.

Here we have an amazing thing: The end of the 20th century is approaching, and also the end of the second thousand years of Christianity is approaching. I am convinced as a believer that it was a gift straight from heaven. When nobody believed, we got the Holy Father [Pope John Paul II], who undermines the system. He does not fight, but he is there. During a pilgrimage in Warsaw he said, "Don't be frightened, and change the face of the world." A year after these words, I myself, from 10 people a year earlier in opposition, I have 10 million people. People are not scared anymore, and they are trying to change the face of the world. I am not obsessed or saintly. I am a sinner, maybe an even greater one than all of you. But these are facts; almost all those people with whom I spoke are still alive. After this confirmation, after this gift at the end of the 20th century of Christianity, there is a movement 10 million strong which rises and grows. And we do just what you said. We undermine the leadership role of the party and the right of representation of the workers. We say that you do not represent us, you have no right to govern us. We kick into the soft abdomen of the system, and this encourages others. In other countries they are doing likewise. The rest you know.

Workers' Struggles in Poland and Britain

INTERVIEWER: In Britain, many people thought that Margaret Thatcher was against the workers because of the miners' strike. Did you know of that history, and what do you think of the way she treated the workers in Britain?

LECH WALESA: We knew the prime minister's attitude to the workers. You must remember that our struggle was based on workers, but it covered all the professions and all trades. Our battle was not just for survival, but primarily about freedom. We did not fight due to compulsion from the point of view that we should have rather fought for a freedom which would allow us to get more bread. But if we had fought on this basis, then communism would have beaten us. Due to this we fought for freedom through bread. Because this system referred to the masses, to workers, to slogans, so we said, then give it to the workers. The workers are protesting; they do not agree. So there is a difference between the workers' fight here and the fight of workers in Great Britain or anywhere else. There is a difference which the West, right up to the end, did not understand.

Now coming straight back to the question, I am not hiding my attitude to the actions of the lady prime minister in relation to workers. It has to be remembered that it was not her whim. It was not hatred towards a person, to a worker; it was an economic concept. She was convinced and her leadership and her government [were convinced] that she had to do it for the children of these workers, that these workers have to pay a large price with their pain so that their children would be better off. That is the way we understood her actions. Did she have good ideas, good plans? We did not go into that. As I have said, we guided ourselves by patriotism, by freedom. We looked at the authorities from a different point of view, and that is why the Polish worker bore no grudges against Mrs. Thatcher, although he too wanted that nothing would change, that nobody had to pay bills, that everybody had it better. Well, only in leadership are there such difficult situations at times.

Poland's Transition from Communism to Capitalism

INTERVIEWER: When you achieved your great victory with the elections in 1989, many Western advisors, Jeffrey Sachs and others, came here to advise your new government on economic concepts. What did you think of the concepts that they were telling you you had to adopt?

COMMANDING HEIGHTS

Lech Walesa

7

LECH WALESZA: The situation was more than dramatic, because the political system can be changed in one night, the economic system in years, and the mentality in generations. We managed to change the political system; however, as I mentioned, the economic one needs years. You have to remember that for 45 years we had our own joint effort, our cooperation, our European Union, which was then called RWPG [Polish abbreviation for the Soviet-sponsored Council for Mutual Economic Assistance]. The center of this joint economic effort was Moscow. In fact, 80 percent of the economy here was primarily in cooperation with Moscow. When we achieved freedom, this cooperation was almost totally severed, for various reasons. That is why it was a drama. Then communism fell. Nobody doubted that.

Capitalism was a different system, which we did not know, which we had to build rapidly. There was no third way, neither then nor today. We did everything in our power to save ourselves from this catastrophe. We had to build capitalism, not like you did it, from the bottom, a small factory then a bigger one. We had to build capitalism from the top, because the bottom did not move at all. It had no ideas or money and no initiative. That is why Sachs and others prompted us with that, which was necessary at the time.

Well, you try and build capitalism from the top. Nobody did that and nobody knows whether it is right. However, we were in a forced situation. If we had not tried it then we would have starved to death, because [up to that point] all hope and cooperation, as I said, was with the Soviet Union and communist countries. All leadership was based on government decisions. We changed the government. There was no decision-[making], and the whole of the economy stood still, and the directors looked to see what to do. They did not make any decisions, and it was necessary to somehow quickly find an owner for all of this so that he would take it over and manage it, do something with it. Otherwise it was over for us. Today, many come to the conclusion that we made many losses here, that it was done wrong. I agree with this. But it is only today that the twits are waking up and asking, "Where are the assets? Where are the factories?" But the question can be inverted and one can ask, "Where were you when the factories needed you? Why did you not make something of this? Were you waiting for an earthquake?" We had to govern, we had to do something, and we did what was necessary at that time.

From here Mr. Sachs and others, not suiting some sort of philosophy of Western rebuilding, but actually exceptional individuals, they were right at this historical moment. But generally looking at capitalism, they were not right. Capitalism is built from the base, but we had an abnormal situation. If the West, the European Union ... if they had quickly worked out and proposed, for the post-communist countries, a plan similar to the Marshall Plan after the second world war, which is what I was striving for—I only call it the Marshall Plan because this plan is known; I am talking about a planned approach for post-communist countries, a plan to make them bear fruit—then we would have really had a much greater effect. We all would have benefited from it. As it is still known today, there is no integral planning approach to this, what happened after communism collapsed. Once again the West, comfortably, smartly, using the old system, slightly hurriedly takes the best pieces for itself and the rest is shortsightedly left for the country to deal with. This is the unimaginative approach of the West, and especially that of the United States. The United States, quite rightly, thinks itself the superpower, which it is, a military, economic, and information superpower, but it does not supercede the world morally and in according to plan. This is useless leadership, disastrous leadership that could result in a bad ending for us all.

Rebuilding Poland's Economy in the 1990s

INTERVIEWER: When the sudden economic changes began in 1990, as the leader of your people, how did you explain the fact that many people were suffering because [under] the new economic plans [they] lost their jobs? How did you explain to your people that that was necessary?

LECH WALESZA: At present, on the basis of trust and victory, things have worked out well. For a fairly long time I kept an umbrella over government and the reforms, but as you know, I now have to pay the bill, and now I am losing because people paid a lot. So everybody recognizes the greatness of victory. However, with regard to paying the bills for this hard slog, well, they have begun to send them to my address. I suppose it has to be that way. As I said, we succeeded because of enthusiasm, speed, momentum, and faith, and success, and then it got worse, and today it is rather difficult.

I should explain that I was prepared for this battle. Ten years before, I led a strike also here in the shipyard, so if it is a matter of a fight, I was well prepared. I also thought it over as to

how difficult these reforms would be. There is a film, it is on all the films which people then made, there at the end when we are victorious, I am saying at the gate, "Today you have carried me on your shoulders, but tomorrow perhaps you will be throwing stones at us and at me." Sometimes it is very near to that. You can only improve [conditions] a little, make it a bit more fair, but these reforms are really painful because for 50 years a different philosophy was being built. For 50 years workplaces were built for the person, not for economic reasons. There was a man, there were people, [and] so that they were not bored, so that they would not think about politics, a workplace was built for them so that there was work, so that almost everybody had work. This was all thrown into one hat, and there they all sat. The economic reasons were secondary in the plan, so it was a completely different economic philosophy.

If we now say that every workplace has to prove itself on the economic market, then it will show that three-quarters of these workplaces, even the new ones, are not in the right place. We had workplaces more modern than in Great Britain or the States. There were such workplaces, but not in the right place. There was a construction enterprise, a very good enterprise, except that every third day you had to dig a deep well and you had to transport the sand from 200 kilometers away. We all know that these two materials are needed for building, and thus our enterprises were not effective, [to] say nothing of the technology, [which] was frequently low. The worker understood all of this, but he did not understand a few other things. For example, we were all happy when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. Everybody was happy—myself, the whole of Poland, and the world. Only nobody noticed that 250,000 people would lose their livelihood, because that was the approximate number of people who lived from [the Pact]. They were specialists, very good turners, welders, machinist millers, or aircraft specialists. We made helicopters for the Warsaw Pact.

Of course, they do not have to make weapons, they do not have to make helicopters, they can make other things [that are] more useful and needed in Poland, Europe, and the world. [But] financial investment is necessary for this, for various other machines, recreating tractors or cars from cannons. However, because the scale was so great, because we were reconstructing the whole country, we were unable to carry out the reconstruction ourselves. Therefore a plan was needed, the new generation Marshall Plan, as I called it, making use of people and technical potential, even for different tasks, to earn and for those people to earn directly, and at the same time for those who got things going. However, I did not succeed in doing this.

INTERVIEWER: When you were developing the economic plan, when you would meet with Mr. Balcerowicz [former Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz], would you encourage him to do a very quick plan? How did you monitor what he was doing?

LECH WALESZA: At that time there was a generation which understood one another without words. Such a political generation as Mrs. Thatcher, Mr. Reagan, Mr. Kohl, [myself], and many others. Similarly, there were politicians who understood what had to be done in the economy. Balcerowicz had to do what he did. However, I was advising him right from the beginning, and I resent the fact that he did not listen to me. I advised him to look for a twin Balcerowicz brother. The first one does what he did. He did it well; he closed down, immobilized, did not add money to, and dissolved bad management. But the twin brother should have been 1,000, 2,000 people, economists, well prepared and who would have been familiar with the opportunities of Poland, of the West, and they would have tried to salvage something of the economy—in one case to retrain people for other duties; in another case to give farmworkers land, for example, on state collective farms; in a third case to hand over machinery, lathes, or something. Take something from someone and do something—it is your business. So this other brother of Balcerowicz was somebody who walked among the ruins caused by the first one and attempted to make something of it, not to renovate, not to return to the old production—that was not the point—only to salvage at least something from the people. Train the young people; empower the old. He left helpless people here with their initiative destroyed. He left the masses, who were helpless, without money, without any idea [of what to do next], and that is the fault of the whole government and Balcerowicz as well.

He is paying now for the second part. People were left to their own devices in terribly difficult conditions. What were they to do, when they had a factory for arming helicopters, what was this person supposed to do when helicopters were no longer required? A good craftsman, quite rightly he did not get additional funding, as there was nowhere to sell because there was no more Warsaw Pact. However, the authorities, Balcerowicz, should have done something with this, with these craftsmen, with the machinery. We did not do this, we did not succeed in doing this, and this is the criticism of Balcerowicz and our government.

INTERVIEWER: Before your victory the economy in Poland had been almost ruined by the Communists and by the Soviets. It was in very bad shape. Any government coming in would

face an enormous challenge. Were you afraid that you might not be able to reform the economy, that it might collapse?

LECH WALESZA: Of course the economy was in a bad state, but for various reasons—not because of the workers, but because of the arrangements, because of mistakes in the uneconomic construction of enterprises. As I said earlier, these enterprises were in the wrong places. There was another thing involved. We were supported by coal; the coal made up our losses. However, at this time the coal era was ending. Western countries were turning to different sources of fuel, to oil, and the situation with coal got worse. That is what finished us, finished our economy. That was a bad state of affairs.

[But] it depends on how we look at the economy, for if we look at opportunities and needs, then this was not that bad a state of affairs. Let's look at our streets, our highways, roads, at our cities, cars, the numbers in relation to the West. Here the opportunities were much greater than in your country. However, the problem is how to set it in motion, how to balance the accounts. So if we were to compare your cars, your factories with ours—one does not do it like this. Everything has to be placed according to needs and opportunities, then a balance can be made. That is possible. When comparisons are made, one cannot take them into account. And that is why one should not think in this way.

The needs of Poland were great, and they are great today. We have to build almost twice the amount of accommodations that we already have. We have to rebuild almost all the roads. From this point of view, we have it better than you. You have overproduction, you do not know what to do next, whereas we have your example and we know what to do. We have got work, so we will have money, whereas you have trouble. That is why everything depends on how one understands things, what is taken into account. But in reality, relative to your [British] economy, ours was in a terrible state. Could a comparison actually be made? It probably could not be compared. There, every enterprise, everyone had to support themselves and balance their accounts, but it was not like that here. We all had to survive somehow. Again, if we had looked at your unemployment then, I do not know if it was 8 percent or 10 percent, but we did not have any unemployment here. So if we were to have compared it then, it would have been better here. It was better then, but it was hidden unemployment. People pretended that they were working, but they did [not] work. It was enough for basic

things. So this way of thinking, direct comparison of economies, are not comparable things. They are different philosophies. Communism cannot be compared with capitalism because, as you know, it is a different philosophy. You can compare efficiency, because it really was ten to one, the economic efficiency was ten to one. As I said, it all depends on what you look at.

The Western Model of Development and "Crafty Globalism"

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that America and the West did not develop a Marshall Plan like you suggested?

LECH WALESZA: The West felt victorious. The Western economy was in a mediocre state, [and] when communist opportunities opened up, what was the point of doing it? The West is rather shortsighted—that is, today I am earning, and tomorrow I will think of how to earn more. It does not produce long-term plans for itself, that it is not all just about today but also about tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. Thus political, strategic, and even economic life carries on fluidly, but also in leaps. The West developed slowly, fluidly. Therefore, it was unable to deal with the leap which occurred. Just like in the army. ... In the army the best concept was to get ahead by short leaps. That means when they are not shooting at you, you run. If they are shooting at you, then you lie down on the ground and crawl. The West as victor, crawling slowly at 1 percent, at 5 percent, [it] crawls along like that. It makes sense for it to do so. It makes some business from it, but this business does nothing for us, because it does not make use of the great opportunities which we had here, which we have and we will have for a very long time. It just plays for its own good, straightforward economic justification for its small interests without seeing the big interest.

Hence even this idea for globalism, very crafty, especially for the United States, because in globalism they say this: Let us in everywhere, into every country; we will select what suits us, and the rest is your business. One day there will be globalism. Globalism has to occur someday, but if there is to be globalism, then there must be an idea of how to do it—not just selection, not just simple snatches, but plans. That is why I propose such globalism, but before that continentalism. I am very scared that in 20 years' time ... the United States, a country which taught democracy, [will] have wire entanglements between the States and Mexico. You are nationalists. You do not open your borders. What sort of an idea is that? What, are they [the Mexicans] not human? You have made your money from a variety of

countries, not always with clean business. Maybe you could also help others with their interests and not defend yourselves with wire entanglements and rockets. Something like this will happen in 20 years' time if we jump into globalism in such a careless way and bypass continentalism.

The world is developing in a rather logical manner, which means that once we had horses, bicycles, motorbikes, we did not fit in our villages, in our cities. We had to create states so that we would not kill ourselves. Now when we have the Internet, satellite television, many other things, cars and airplanes, there are nations, petty states in Europe which cannot have these fast airplanes because they are unable to take off and land within their boundaries, they are so small and the speed is so great. We have to create continentalism because we are simply being stifled. Of course, certain things are already global. There is satellite television and mobile telephones, [and things] like ecology that are already global. Here we have to defend ourselves and benefit from it.

However, a more important matter is continentalism. That means to even out the development of the whole continent of Europe, to simplify the equalization of planning and development, because we will otherwise collide. God did not make everything even. In one place they grow bananas, oranges, and wheat, and there is oil underground. In another place only wheat grows, and the person who has it all will die from overeating, whereas I will die of hunger. Therefore, he must give way to me so that he can live, and so can I. He has to stop growing wheat, because I have the wheat growing here, and the rest I do not have. Then he can grow more bananas and oranges, and I will buy that from him, and he will buy this from me, so we will exchange. And he and I will [both] survive if we do it. Otherwise, without planning, then we will choke. There are such places where you cannot build chemical enterprises or steelworks—say, in Rome or London. It cannot be done; you have to build somewhere where the environment allows it. Thus I give you for the good [of everyone] a concession for these bad enterprises, but you have to give me a concession for something else, not some sort of communist planning, No clever, computer-calculated planning, treating it as if the whole of Europe is ours and the whole world is ours. However, it is only on loan, and we have to give it back to the next generation.

Globalization and the Need for World Leadership

INTERVIEWER: When you see protestors in Seattle and Prague taking to the streets against globalism, as someone who led a great protest movement yourself, do you feel any connection or sympathy with those protestors?

LECH WALESZA: I have already told you about it currently being a crafty globalism, without logic and planning, and that is why it has such an effect. We will not protect ourselves against globalism. There is nothing for it, because it results from civilization's technical development. However, not like it looks now. Now it is just the crafty people from various countries trying to pluck out the best pieces, and they call it globalism without strategy. We do not have a leader for today; I mentioned this in the United States. We do not have a world leader at all. Once there were two blocks that controlled each other. They checked what the other was doing. Today, the United States has taken up position like a policeman by a red light. They look after the red light, but it is neither good for them nor for us. Leadership is needed—not money, not dollars, [but] leadership, clever concepts, continental visions, visions which even out the field, visions which will not allow us to make the same mistakes as in the Balkans. Prior to this, before anything can take place, it must be protected and that is not at all difficult.

We must remember that we are living on the edge of an epoch. Not only 2,000 years—a century has ended. We are the generation which changes epochs. Up to the 20th century we can say that this whole period was an Earth epoch, "Earth" meaning the riches of the earth, simple physical work. That is why there were wars, the movement of frontiers, war over riches. However, the 20th century is coming to an end, and an air epoch is setting in, "air" in the meaning of intellect, Internet, information, and you can buy more for it, like coal, copper, and oil. Therefore the epochs are changing, and [so are] their businesses. ... All this has to be seen and all this changed, because the air and intellect epoch requires [more] laws and protection than the Earth epoch—a different UN, a different NATO, a different distribution—and this should be done by a leader like the United States and organizations which already exist.

I said the UN, but we are in such a situation just as if in our time we had not brought in the Highway Code. Imagine for yourselves, gentlemen, that we have no regulations. We would not venture out onto the street, because we would be knocked down. Today we are in such a

situation [in] that we have a new epoch and old regulations, old solutions, and nobody to do this. Additionally, politicians are thinking in terms of time [in] office, territorial categories, districts, because they want to be reelected because it is important for them. They are elected for that, and they do not think at all, like Marshall did previously, after the war, after the harm he thought generally, in a European manner. This is not so nowadays. Democracy is twisted. The challenge is twisted. You have to speed through talks, meetings, and films. You have to force these types of thoughts. This is already beginning here and there. I travel widely for lectures, meetings, especially with young people. I encourage them to notice this, and to include themselves in building it.

The Divergent Economic Paths of Russia and Poland After 1989

INTERVIEWER: Many people look at Poland today and say that it has been a great economic success. Of course, some people have suffered, but when compared to Russia, the Polish economy has done much better. Why do you think that is? What does it tell you about the way Poles have adapted to market reforms?

LECH WALESZA: Once again, our starting point needs to be told. The philosophy of Lenin, Stalin, and Brezhnev was simple: to make countries dependent on economic cooperation. I say this so that it is understood. We made half a tractor in Poland and half a tractor was made in the Soviet Union, half a car in Czechoslovakia and half in the Soviet Union, half a washing machine in the GDR and half a washing machine in the Soviet Union. That way we would not break away from them—division of economic labor, division so that we could not be free. But no one supposed, [neither] Lenin, Marx, or Brezhnev, that one day we would all gain our freedom. No one supposed this. They thought that if one of us got out of hand they would cope, but we would not. Then, almost in a single day, the whole empire collapsed and it transpired that we smaller countries, middle-sized countries, found cooperation with France, with Great Britain, with the States, with Germany, and we are somehow sorting out something for ourselves.

The country who had it the worst was Russia, or the Soviet Union—Russia primarily, because it was left with only the halves. We had some halves, but not many; they had nothing but halves, and that is why transformation in such a situation can be defined as being directly proportional to the size of the country. Russia, a large country, has the largest problems. In

Russia during the past 70 years of communism, large towns of 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants formed. People came from the country, they were trained somewhere or other, and built these towns. But these towns existed on the basis of cooperation with Poland, with Czechoslovakia, with Hungary, with Bulgaria, and when these countries separated from them, these towns became completely unnecessary. And so Russia's problems are incredibly hard. They lost cooperation with all of us and simultaneously lost our markets for their goods, and that is why I do not envy their problems today.

Russia [has problems] from Moscow, from Leningrad, but the further you go the worse the problems, incredible problems. They must start from scratch, building cooperation and markets for their goods, so that is how it is. As a trade unionist I traveled to the West, and quite a few times at meetings I cried out that we need your generals—General Motors, General Electric, and others, but they did not come, these big companies. The colonels came, medium-sized companies, but they came. However, Russia waited. There was no one to do it, they were proud, and it turned out that they came off badly by it. Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia—these countries somehow managed all right because they were smaller, medium-sized countries. Smaller countries, we found cooperation, we pulled ourselves up somehow, whereas to pull Russia up—oh, how that is difficult. That is why a Marshall Plan would have been needed, particularly for Russia, the Ukraine, or Belarus.

What Russia received from the West—grants and repayable loans, without a plan and without controls—was completely wasted. ... It is irrecoverable, because if money is given without controls, without ideas, it will disappear—and it disappeared. If one-fourth, one-third of this money which went to Russia from the West, officially and unofficially, if it had gone in accordance with my plan, in accordance with a plan at all and with controls, it would have been highly effective. It was done otherwise, without controls, without ideas, [and] the funds were wasted.

This Marshall Plan of mine proposes only business. This is not like the plan just after the war. This is a plan to which those who want to take part, they take part for business and not to give somebody somewhere charity. It is a three-level plan, primarily economic management. I divided Eastern economic management into three groups: the very good enterprises, because there were some, even in Russia; the medium enterprises; and the disastrous enterprises. The

very good enterprises did not need money. Just buy them for some percent of the West. Interest was expressed, but those interested from the States, or France, or Great Britain, or even from Poland wanted just a guarantee that no one would take it away from them and kill them. Such a guarantee could be given by the atomic power of the United States and NATO, and already a couple of people would have entered these enterprises as a partner.

Secondly, the medium-sized enterprises that I mentioned, these form the majority. Even in Russia there were interested parties who would have joined these enterprises as a partner. But they required the same as those in the first point: security, and that no one would take anything away from them, and they needed tax relief for a year or two or three. They could have been given a tax-free period, and for the time being the money added from under the Marshall Plan. When they had pulled these enterprises up, they would then pay back what we gave them. Isn't it a beautiful idea?

The third idea [was] for the enterprises that were disastrous, and there were quite a lot of these, especially in Russia. Here I proposed that these enterprises were acquired for nothing. We were ready—and the Russians [should have been ready]—to give manufacturers for nothing a mine or even a shipyard, only on the condition that they retain some of the workforce and pay them. When the enterprise took off after 20 years, then they would repay via tax what they had received. People would have had work, they would have paid tax, and it would have been worthwhile for everyone. And \$1 million or \$2 million could have even been added to these enterprises, depending on the type, because it would have been worth it, because these people would have been in work and would have repaid it through tax, but now they stand still and do nothing and no one has anything. A very simple plan, which I have been promoting for over 10 years, and we would have all profited from it. But the West did not take it up. Why? Well, I had bad luck, because there were elections in the United States, [and] Clinton promised an America for Americans. That is why no one took up this plan. He was not prepared [to get involved], and big plans without the United States do not work out. The United States are necessary for inspiration. That is why there was no plan, but it is high time there was such a plan. I sent a letter to both presidential candidates, to Bush and to Gore, for them to take up my idea, because this idea allows everyone to make some money.

Walesa's Faith in Poland's Success

INTERVIEWER: I read a story that when you were arrested, you said to the man who was arresting you, "Because of this we will bury you." What was it in your soul that made you so sure that eventually you would bring freedom to your people?

LECH WALESZA: I was totally convinced, with regard to victory, that a new epoch was coming, because I had a technical education. I worked in technology, televisions, I was already monitoring satellite television and all these processes. As an old hand I knew that it would not last long. That is why I believed 100 percent in success. I only considered what costs would have to be paid, and the time period, which I wanted to hasten. So that is why at the time of my arrest I said these words, except that I said more or less, "Yes, you are really putting the nails into the coffin. You have lost totally. It is the end for you. These are the last nails into the coffin of communism, and you are hammering them in. I have won." Then I perhaps went too far, because I said, "You will come to me on your knees, asking me to help you out of this." This later interfered with the making of contacts, because no one likes to come on their knees, and they were still militarily strong. [I thought] they had no possibility of leadership, but everyone has. I am a fairly excitable person, and sometimes I go too far. Being right, I go too far, and here I went too far. Everything went according to plan, as I had planned, so I was successful and besides, it is still going along in accordance with the reasoning I outlined then.

INTERVIEWER: I read somewhere that you said it was like a revolution of the soul, not just like something driving you and your people, [but] faith and belief. And then after that, too, as they struggled, they had an inner belief. Could you talk about that spiritual drive?

LECH WALESZA: I told you earlier that I am totally convinced that at the end of the second millennium we got a gift in the form of the Holy Father, if we wanted to express this as a percentage of this success. But I also told you earlier that communism was losing anyway because it could not keep up with the speed of development, Star Wars [the Reagan-proposed missile defense plan], and various other things. It simply could not take it, and it hindered development so much. For a satellite television aerial one had to obtain permission from the minister for internal affairs. But in a little while these aerials would have been as little as a matchbox, [and] everyone would have one in their pocket. Typewriters, the old ones, had to

be registered at the police station. Magnetic tapes were confiscated from us. It was hilarious. So this system was losing.

Obviously I was and still am a believer. I watched these processes, so if I wanted to summarize them, from faith but not from fanaticism, only from intelligent faith. My god is in the newest computer, the latest generation. He lets me live and fight, fight intelligently, and does not cause me any problems at all. You just have to see him. Not everyone can find him. And so I saw this gift of the Holy Father in this victory. Looking at it in this way, as 55 percent the Holy Father as victory, 35 percent for the Solidarity of 1980, next the understanding with Mrs. Thatcher, Kohl, Reagan, later Bush. We all understood without words what we each had to do, without having to agree—that was the remaining percent. But final success was assured, rubber-stamped not by Gorbachev, but Yeltsin. In what way? Yeltsin slowly tried to withdraw Russia from the Soviet Union. He resisted Gorbachev and those various combinations, and finally withdrew Russia from the Soviet Union, as we remember. Although the Berlin Wall came down earlier, if it were not for the climate that Yeltsin had created, and for the attempts and subsequent withdrawal from the Soviet Union, the Berlin Wall would have been rebuilt by the chancellor and by the president of the United States if it were not for Yeltsin and the conditions he created. So faith, faith brings about miracles, and that is the truth. I believed in this, and I did not have a shadow of any doubt at all. Only this was not fanaticism. It was conscious consideration and concepts and observation of the world, and that is why it was realistic and it brought victory—victory, but [only] in these political and other categories. In the economy, it should come tomorrow.