

## **Abstract (Summary)**

In his first autobiography, *A Way of Hope*, [Lech Walesa] chronicled the early years of Poland's Solidarity movement. This second autobiography looks at the years leading up to Solidarity's success as a political party and Walesa's election as president.

By the mid-1980s, Solidarity had achieved prominence and Walesa had become its indisputable leader. But, despite the profound effect that Solidarity has had on European history, Walesa remains philosophical about its significance. He sees political success as transitory and illusionary. Rather, he bases his faith on the ideals of democracy, the Catholic Church and the family.

## **Full Text**

(373 words)

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Solidarity monopoly among biggest fears of Lech Walesa

THE STRUGGLE AND THE TRIUMPH: An Autobiography, by Lech Walesa (Arcade, 330 pages, \$30).

Solidarity monopoly among biggest fears of Lech Walesa

In his first autobiography, *A Way of Hope*, Lech Walesa chronicled the early years of Poland's Solidarity movement. This second autobiography looks at the years leading up to Solidarity's success as a political party and Walesa's election as president.

By the mid-1980s, Solidarity had achieved prominence and Walesa had become its indisputable leader. But, despite the profound effect that Solidarity has had on European history, Walesa remains philosophical about its significance. He sees political success as transitory and illusionary. Rather, he bases his faith on the ideals of democracy, the Catholic Church and the family.

Throughout this period of democratization, Walesa emphasized what he regarded as the primary needs of emerging nations. His belief that political and economic stability are central to membership in a European community and participation in world markets was his focus during this period. The 1989 visit to North America characterized his foreign visits: the unabashed rattle of his tin cup.

As Solidarity transcended its shipyard roots, Walesa also emphasized the need to heal past animosities. Looking to the modern Spanish model in 1987, he urged that future goals are more

important than purging the past. His goal was to portray Poland as an undivided and bankable nation.

Although he deliberately adopted a forgiving philosophy toward the Communist establishment, some events nonetheless had a profound effect on his assessment of the extremes of political repression. The assassination of Father Jerzy Popieluszko in 1984 represented the vindictiveness of a petty bureaucracy. The 1943 execution of over 4,000 Polish army officers at Katyn represented the monumental paranoia of Joseph Stalin.

Yet, when pressed to express a radical response to injustice, Walesa prefers to disassociate himself from a reactionary blood-letting. Economic realities have shaped Walesa's approach to achieving a credit rating. Injustice has taught him to suspect absolute power.

Since the publication of this book, Walesa has withdrawn his support for Solidarity, fulfilling words he wrote in his autobiography: "Poland's future would be in danger if the old Communist monopoly were simply replaced by a Solidarity monopoly."

(Hemmings is a Calgary writer.)

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