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KATALLAGETE

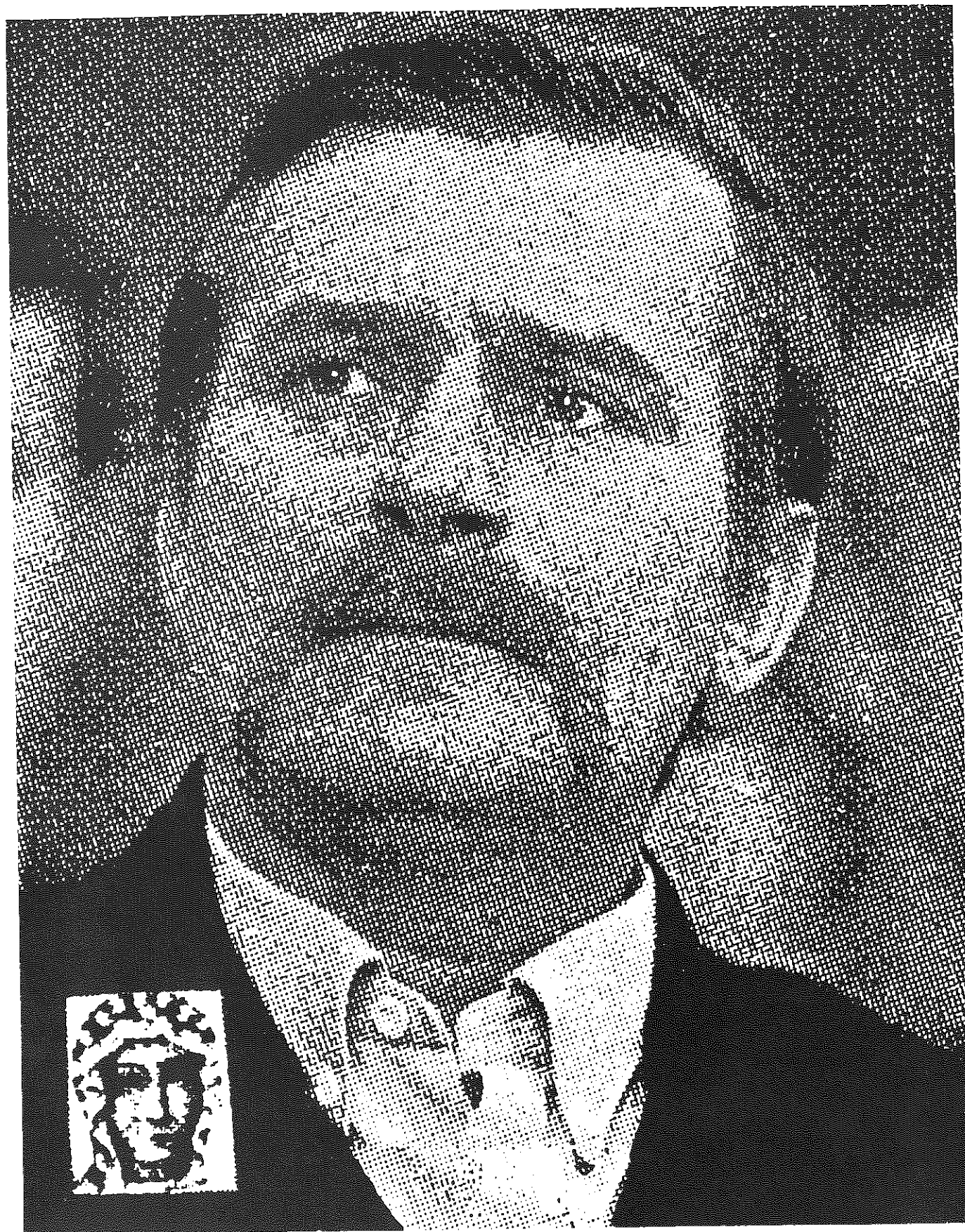


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LECH WALESA AND THE SOCIAL FORCE OF CHRISTIANITY

Jacques Ellul

COVERS:

Front: Crowds gathering around a floral cross in Warsaw's Castle Square. The Polish government has erected a six foot high fence around Victory Square, which had become a popular gathering place for Poles to pray and sing together. The cross in Castle Square replaces the one in Victory Square. An Associated Press Photo, used by permission of World Wide Photos.

Inside: Courtesy of Solidarity International, 175 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3339, New York, New York 10010.

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JACQUES ELLUL is Professor of Law and Jurisprudence at the University of Bordeaux. His most recent books published in the United States include *The Betrayal of the West*, *Apocalypse*, *The Ethics of Freedom* and *The New Demons*. Earlier works include *The Technological Society*, *Propaganda*, *The Political Illusion* and *Autopsy of Revolution*. He is a member of the Editorial Board of *Katallagete*. This article was translated by Brian J. Dendle, Professor of Spanish, University of Kentucky, Lexington, and the Editors of *Katallagete*.

LECH WALESA AND THE SOCIAL FORCE OF CHRISTIANITY

Jacques Ellul

Hundreds of articles have been written about Lech Walesa. Everything seems to have been said. I believe, however, that one aspect of his activities and motivation has been overlooked, perhaps because some of us have always felt embarrassed talking about "religion and politics." It has been reported time and time again that Walesa is a Catholic and everyone has seen him on television either brandishing his wooden and Holy Cross, or carrying it under his arm, or wearing it in the lapel of his coat. This should not be ignored. But we must not simplify or convert Walesa into a second Joan of Arc and create a *deus ex machina* to "explain" what is happening in Poland. Nevertheless, the totality of events, the success of Walesa and *Solidarity*, cannot easily be explained. The failure of the official national union, the hesitancy of the Polish government, the retreat of the Communist Party, the caution of the Soviet Union and its verbal threats. . . all this is difficult to understand. Yes, I know the several explanations proffered and the so-called "contextual analyses" which have been made, but I am not satisfied with them.

I BACKGROUND

First, we see in Poland a conflagration which took the form of a "logic of liberty." In the beginning was the simple demand for a free trade union; that is, a second, parallel, unofficial union run by the workers themselves: *Solidarity*. From this starting point, in the form of a non-aggressive demand, came a sort of logical development, by contagion, by example, in stages not spontaneous but which revealed at each step a new and concrete affirmation of freedom. It was thus the extension of the way of taking decisions from *the base*, the base being constantly consulted on ever more numerous points, but never behaving excessively or

violently. [In French, "*la base*" in an organization or institution means the *members* as opposed to the administrators. For Marxists, "*la base*" means the workers. See page seven for "*la base*" in the Polish situation today.] Referring decisions to the base implied a permanent dialogue between a leader, Lech Walesa, who was never coercive, always listening and advising, and a base which listened to his advice. The Poles began to examine working conditions and to demand changes, none of which was excessive or *maximalist*. [By *maximalism*, Marxists mean the doctrine or tactic of demanding the *maximum immediately* (instead of proceeding by successive stages). This usually leads to the failure of the social or revolutionary movement. "Maximalism" has therefore become a frequent accusation among Marxists. If one is accused of "maximalism" it means: someone who presents hyper-revolutionary demands *with the real* (but unstated) *goal of provoking the failure* of the socialist movement and helping the return of capitalism.] All this led in Poland to radical transformation. It led—"in the logic of liberty"—to claim control of local authorities. Abuses and lies were denounced (but always in a just and moderate manner). At the same time came the demand that local authorities exist to *serve* citizens and must accept definite controls, along with the possibility for groups of citizens to demand their replacement, the revocation of local authorities and controls when wrongs could be demonstrated. From this point, the *Solidarity* movement continued and spread to the peasantry. Why should not peasant workers have the same organization, the same powers, the same reference to the same base as the union workers?

This was difficult to accept by the Polish government. It was a true revolution, the emergence of a power stronger than that of the official worker's union. One can certainly describe these different stages as a "logic of liberty." When men and women are willing to

commit themselves totally to winning their freedom, the whole of society is gradually and inevitably won over and transformed. This demands great courage. The "logic of liberty" prevails only when its initiators risk everything. It is all or nothing: Czechoslovakia in 1968. It involves the radical and decisive questioning (and not merely "words") of *every* authoritarian and bureaucratic regime (communist, democratic, or technocratic). Now in Poland a totally new model is formed, not a ready-made economic and political schema constructed by theoreticians, but rather a progressive creation in the practice of freedom by the people of Poland. This is what the Czechs attempted from January to May of 1968. The risk is not, as one always imagines, only prison or repression, but also the more serious one of social disorder and economic recession (inevitable in proceeding from one social order to another). It cannot be avoided. The critical question is this: can the country and the government tolerate recession? If the stake has been properly understood, I say, yes! But the game must be worth the stakes.

My second reflection concerns the way *Solidarity* began and developed. With Lech Walesa, there is a policy which is definitely non-violent but at the same time certainly uses methods based on force and authority. [Of course, there were accidental violent confrontations in Gdansk, for example, but on the whole everything took place without violence, as Walesa constantly demanded, even in the sphere of tactical efficiency. He used the weight of unanimous public opinion, the cohesion of workers' groups (which could not be accused of capitalism), the authority of the Catholic Church, and skillful propaganda to convey very quickly to the whole people what was at stake.] What is staggering in Lech Walesa is the mixture of unshakeable firmness and prudence. He never commits himself lightly, he attempts no rash and no spectacular action, he never allows himself to be swept into a hazardous confrontation, but once he starts on a course, he moves straightaway to the goal, with an incredible obstinancy, with no retreat, and with complete intransigence. He constantly uses all his strength, never overexerting himself, and never underestimates his adversary. His decisions, his engagements in combat, always on a terrain which he has chosen, are calculated

and proportionate to the forces involved. He is always at the edge, but never crosses it and never lets himself be pushed too far by his own supporters. Each time, he stops when he has obtained a result. He never attempts to pursue a vanquished or fleeing adversary. This is an astonishing mastery of self, an example for others. He is always ready to negotiate. At the most critical and tense moments, when there is apparently no way out, he agrees to negotiate. But he always keeps in reserve the possibility of strikes—those harsh but non-violent expressions of the base of *Solidarity*. And, in spite of all accusations, he cannot be caught "lacking in socialism." He remains, wishes to be, and calls himself a "socialist." He calls into question administrators and a party not "worthy of socialism." He is strongly anti-reactionary, anti-capitalist. He cannot be trapped on this point; accusations soon fall flat. He is indeed remarkably adept at not going too far and avoiding violence in the face of the power of the State. He speaks firmly but never insultingly. He is respectful of authorities, and the Communist Party listens to him in proportion to this respect. He says, with a certain sense of humor, that the *apparat* is no worse than the rest! In other words, he reveals extremely rare political qualities and attitudes. To say that he is a charismatic leader is not enough. That explains nothing. Hitler and St. Francis were charismatic leaders. The important thing is to know *which* charisma, *which* gift allows Lech Walesa this behavior, this mastery of self, this authority.



I am certain this comes from his Christian faith. I believe Lech Walesa to be the model of the Christian involved in politics. He represents everything the Christian faith should entail in a man in politics: moderation, respect for one's adversaries, authority, total commitment, humility, non-violence, mastery of self, realism, and a sufficiently strong motivation to commit himself totally and without retreat to the path of

liberty, truth and justice. Walesa commits himself exactly *in this way*, that is, without violence and without hatred. But I must not digress from what I have just written. I am *not* saying that Walesa is an example of "Christian politics." There is *no* Christian politics. I do say that he is an example of what every Christian who engages in political activity ought to be. I do not say that Christianity makes him "succeed," that his actions are right because they are inspired by the Holy Ghost, or that he is protected by God and the Virgin. Not at all. I do say that the Christian faith (when it is true, when it is lived) brings to birth certain qualities, finds expression in behavior which is different, radically different, from anything to be found elsewhere, and Walesa is at present a remarkable example. In short, I say neither that Walesa is supported or inspired by the Church nor that this is where he takes counsel nor that he follows or applies "doctrines" of the Church. All we know about him shows him as totally independent of the Church in this respect, that he is not applying a strategy of the Church; rather his strategy is born of his Christian faith. What inspires him is not a doctrine defined by the Church. I see rather a very socialist inspiration, the famous "socialism with a human face." I said earlier that there is *no* Christian politics. Going one step further, I would say that neither is there a political doctrine derived from Holy Scripture nor a theologically-based model of an ideal State.

Nevertheless, and this is my fourth point, if Lech Walesa is neither an instrument of the Church nor makes use of the sociological strength of the Church, if he represents to me an individual committed to Christian faith, he is not standing alone! When he brandishes his cross of wood before a crowd of workers, the gesture is full of meaning and responds to a deep reality. In other words, for his non-violent action to have the impact to make Communist power retreat, it is because he relies on a popular consensus and because his complex strategy is understood in its essence by the Polish people. For example, I find it astonishing to see workers agree to halt a declared strike merely because negotiations are underway. Lech Walesa corresponds in a particular way to the people. The correspondence is not artificially created by propaganda. It is not a *Fuhrertum*. Nor does this consensus derive simply from socialism or communism. We must recognize that the

correspondence and the consensus are born of Catholic Christianity. But even on this point numerous misunderstandings are possible. I certainly do not mean that all the Poles, all the workers who marched with Walesa, are Christians—no more so than that the widespread public opinion which supports him throughout Poland is a "Christian public opinion"!

There are those who live by the Christian faith. To be a Christian is neither a habit nor belonging to a social group nor the possession of vague beliefs. However, this is what one invariably thinks about when one thinks of a "Christian people." But a "people" do not live this "Christian" designation. Within a people there are Christian as well as a whole amalgam of beliefs originating more or less in Christianity, rites, feasts, moral precepts, which are followed even when the living faith no longer exists. Society is baptized, without being "Christian." It becomes Christianized, harmonized by ideological adherence to commonplace beliefs more or less assumed and taught by the Church. The society is organized with institutions more or less inspired by the Church. It functions with an official reverence for God, and a first, all-important place granted to the Church. The society is what used to be termed "Christendom," in which people were no more truly Christian than elsewhere. But also no less. Such was Polish society before 1930.

Now things become exciting. Kierkegaard harshly attacked the Protestant Christendom in which he lived in Denmark in the early nineteenth century. Many of us in the 1930's attacked "Christendom," believing the Church and Christians had committed a betrayal when they made a pact with the Roman Empire and that the Middle Ages were centuries of false Christianity rather than of "Christendom." We habitually despised those we called "sociological Christians," that is, those who had a veneer of Christian morality, had their children baptized, and were married and buried in the Church, and nothing more. I am not saying that Poles were only that. I am saying that, without doubt, as in every country in Western Christendom, a great number were like this, possessing, of course, beliefs which were more or less Christian and pagan, superstitions, with a sometimes murky piety. This being the case, I argue that the consensus was formed and the force of this Polish people was established on the base and foundation of this sociological and mass Christianity.

This Polish Christian people had, however, suffered harshly. It had experienced the Nazi invasion and then the Communist iron hand. As always happens in these situations, Christians were divided. Some truly have no motivation and give everything up, protect themselves and cease calling themselves even nominally Christians when the sociological current no longer flows in that direction. Some stand firm, refuse to give way, strengthen their adherence to Christianity, discovering that Christianity is much more than what they had believed, and are no longer satisfied with rites and litanies but begin to grow to a deep understanding, to penetrate the "mysteries" of Christ's Revelation and attain a conscious, voluntary faith. Obviously in France the first current would be in the immense majority. (I cannot speak for the United States, where everyone, especially in politics, demands recognition as a "Christian.") The opposite was the case in Poland. This is because, as has often been said, the Poles have assimilated the Catholic faith to the Polish nation. By adhering more strongly to the former, they defended the latter, and vice versa. [The same phenomenon took place in Bohemia (now Czechoslovakia) in the time of Jan Hus in the fifteenth century, and Hus was executed by the Church.] But—and this point is important to me—this was possible only to the extent that the Church in Poland adopted this same attitude, to the extent that the Church made no compromise with the Nazi invader and later refused to support the communism imposed on their country. If the Church gives way, if it seeks an honorable *modus vivendi* with triumphant communism, if it presents communist power and doctrine as in every respect excellent and legitimate, then sociological Christians simply abandon the Church. The Church demonstrates its uselessness, its weakness. The Church does with the communists the same thing it has been reproached for doing with all the other regimes in history: legitimizing the institution of the State. To the extent that this new (communist) power, guaranteed by the Church, declares itself openly as anti-Christian, seeks to destroy "religion," makes life more difficult for those who call themselves Christian, then the sociological Christians can see no reason to fret about Christianity, attending Church ceremonies and observing commandments they believe reluctantly, if at all and which can cause problems in that society. Therefore, *only* if the Church takes a firm and unflinching *stand*, I will not say "against," but *in the face of*, this new, anti-Christian communist power, can the people take the Church seriously. When the Church declares in the midst of the Communist regime that the regime is indeed anti-Christian; when the Church acknowledges that the regime does some things to favor the proletarian classes then it speaks as *Church*. When

the Church denounces the injustices of the regime, when it never loses an occasion to speak about the suffering of the people, the persecutions, the summary executions, the dictatorship over the proletariat; when it appears as the defender of the newly poor and of the persecuted, *then* the Church is taken seriously by its people. It attracts not horrible reactionaries, fascists and capitalists, but all those who suffer from the new dictatorship. It can even seriously attract sociological Christians.



Then, and *only then* does what I mentioned earlier come about: sociological Christians are converted and become Christians in faith. The Church has to give the example and to be, once again in history, the necessary power *counter* to the State in which we can place our trust. The role of Cardinal Wysznski after 1945 and especially after 1947 was to uphold the "traditional" Church in the face of Communist power and to prevent the Church in Poland from collaborating with and surrendering ideologically and institutionally to Communist power. The Cardinal was assailed with insults—a defender of capitalism, of the bourgeoisie, of traditionalism, the lackey of American imperialism, attached to the privileges of the Church, and in favor of all the privileged in the West. He was suspected of espionage. He was presented as impeding the proper and true evolution of the Church, which could only be carried out, of course, in the Communist way. Few in those days would admit the courage of his decision, that he was maintaining a Christianity which was gradually purifying itself, that he was making possible the independence of the Church. But Wysznski's action was true only to the extent that the Church does not engage in "politics." His was a question neither of commitment to communism nor of working for a return of capitalism nor of helping the Americans. Wysznski's resistance allowed a popular Christian faith to be preserved and, under persecution, the deepening of faith.

At the same time, the Protestantism in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, gave examples of the exact opposite of Wyszynski with J. L. Hromadka and Bishop A. Bereczki. [Hromadka was a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1934 to 1947 when he returned to Prague to resume the Chair of Systematic Theology at Jon Hus Theological Faculty. His *Theology Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, based on the Laidlaw lectures delivered at Knox College, Toronto in 1956, was widely read and discussed in Europe, Canada and the United States in the 1950's. During this period Hromadka was a member of the Central Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches and a vice President of the World Presbyterian Alliance. *Editors*]. Hromadka has had an important influence in the World Council of Churches. Bit by bit, he has taken over the leadership of the Czechoslovakian Reformed Church and gave it over in its totality to the Communist regime. The Protestant Bishop A. Bereczki played the same role in Hungary. Bereczki, less a theologian than Hromadka, secured the complete domination of the Hungarian (Protestant) church with the support of the Communist regime. These two churchmen/theologians resolutely collaborated with the ruling power and the Communist party, sanctimoniously proclaiming that Stalin was truly the liberator of nations, that the Church should cooperate in the building of communism, that Christians should rethink their faith in the light of this new ideology. They were presented as models to the West of what to be and to do. The World Council of Churches unceasingly sang their praises. Karl Barth let himself be caught in their trap. It is said that both Hromadka and Bereczki were serious political and theological thinkers and true Christians. They did not hesitate to take part in the just causes of their time. During that period, I received the *Review of the Protestant Church of Hungary*. After reading it closely for five years, I was able to demonstrate the total manipulation of this Church by the Communists, its degradations, its disintegration. I interpreted nothing. All I did was use the texts provided by this Church. Of course, no one took any notice of my article. The result of the exemplary behavior of these "great political theologians" was that when the revolts took place in Czechoslovakia and Hungary the Reformed Church counted for nothing! Exactly nothing! Their churches brought no help, no support, to those two popular uprisings which are today recognized as legitimate uprisings. I am certain that, instead of these two bad shepherds, Christian leaders should have been firm in the face of (not against!) communist power. Christians should have expressed the total independence of the Church. The Church then proclaims its intention to defend the victims of the regime, its search for freedom within communism and the preservation of

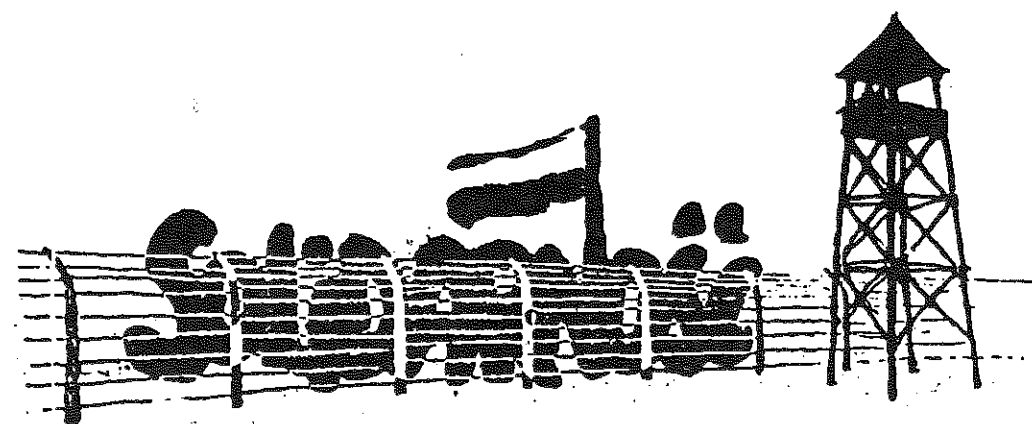
untrammelled Biblical preaching and teaching. Then, the Church would have appeared as *trustworthy*, not in the eyes of the Communist party, but in the eyes of the people of Czechoslovakia and Hungary. This stand would have been of great service in the search for possible solutions in 1956 and 1968.

Collaboration with power, whether Communist or not, is *always* ruinous for the Church. If the Church exists, if it is to have legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it must always stand erect as a counter-power to political power.

In other words, Cardinal Wyszynski prepared the way for Lech Walesa, the militant. The Church in Poland, and Walesa's manner, enabled the Poles to take Catholic faith seriously and deeply, but also endowed a certain habit of being against authority. The Church preserved the possibility of evolution by establishing a counterweight to the communist dictatorship. When the occasion arose, there was not a desperate, disordered struggle, a pointless, bloody and furious revolt. Rather, Poles put into practice the determination to change and to remedy existing injustice. The role of the Church in a period of dictatorship or crisis is therefore to maintain the faith severely and strictly, to reject all social relaxation or political participation, to preserve the rigidity of a counter-power (if need be in exile, clandestinely, or in silence) until the emergence of a new power, made possible precisely by this fidelity, becomes possible.

This is how I explain the Polish phenomenon as the encounter of a man of exceptional political intelligence and a people long prepared to give battle. The charismatic man in the presence of an incoherent mob lacking firm convictions will produce only revolt or frenzied extremism. A hostile mob ready for action will produce only revolt or frenzied extremism. A hostile mob ready for action will produce only sporadic risings without a leader to crystallize its beliefs. What characterizes this *Solidarity* "revolution within a revolution," what we have analyzed above, what is so surprising, cannot be the product of just *any* belief, *any* ideology. Lech Walesa's conduct, as I said, is that of a Christian in politics. It succeeds because he encounters a people which is not only Christian but which evolved its beliefs in the way I have attempted to explain. This is the explanation for *Solidarity* and Lech Walesa: moderation, discipline, understanding of situations—simultaneous flexibility and intransigence.

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II WALESA AND SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

We must understand that *Solidarity* is in no way a rejection of socialism, a return to capitalism, a reestablishment of the bourgeoisie. Quite the contrary! Yes, it certainly is *anti-Soviet* communism; but at the same time it is the appearance of a new socialism. The widely heralded socialism which starts from *the base*—with a human face, self-directing, flexible, progressive—will certainly not be put into practice by the Soviets or by the renewed, profound Marxist theories found throughout the world. The socialism that is being created in Poland by Walesa and *Solidarity* comes out of a Catholic Christianity, deeply lived, exacting, determined and capable of self-renewal and confrontation, with a socialism stripped of its police and its ready-made ideas about economics and administration. This encounter is not a pure and simple spontaneity, heeding all impulses coming from *the base*. *The base* is not "in itself"—the people or the proletariat. It does not exist "in itself"! It cannot be objectively defined: it has a past, beliefs, hopes. It lives today following a specific morality. Its "spontaneity" will differ depending on the components it brings to the crisis. On this point, I believe that the Catholic Christian components explain this remarkable orientation in Poland toward a new socialism. I believe the role of Christianity—if, alas, this were properly understood by the Churches in other nations—provides socialism with the possibility of an evolution which, apart from the *Solidarity* encounter, cannot take place. There is talk about "Christians for socialism." I believe there is only one example and realization of "Christians for socialism": Lech Walesa and his *Solidarity* Union.

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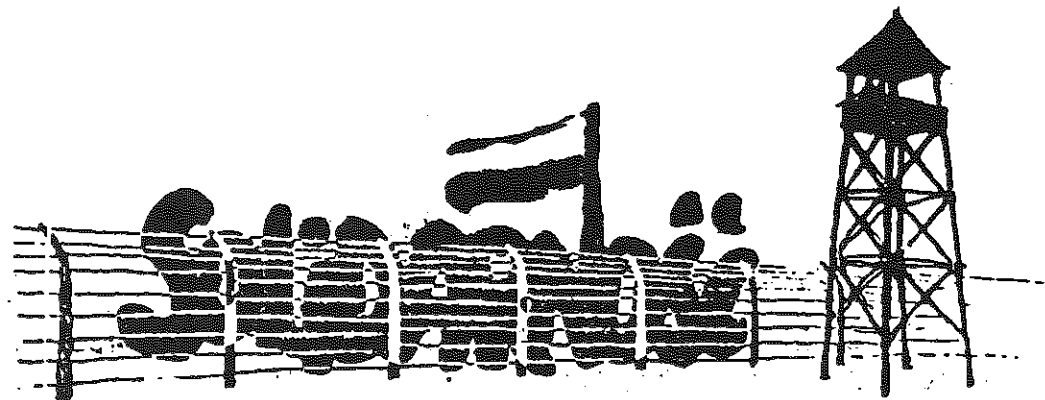
In France and the World Council of Churches, the link, even at times the identity, between socialism and Christianity is excessively evident. The opposite, I suspect, is the proclamation in the United States, i.e., the *incompatibility* of socialism and Christian faith. Walesa gives us a very important example. Of course, I am not about to redefine socialism. I will only point out that we must not confuse socialism, Marxism, communism and Stalinism. These are four different orientations and conceptions, and no single one necessarily implies the others. I am speaking of *socialism*. What is essential to me is that we see in *Solidarity* an encounter, if not a union, between Walesa's socialism and what would seem to be in this respect the harshest, most irreconcilable, most intransigent form of Christianity: Roman Catholicism in Poland. Then the questions: Could Walesa be a bad Christian? I wrote earlier that, on the contrary, his behavior represented a *lived* Christian faith. Is he a bad Catholic? The Pope himself gave Walesa his total approval, blessed him, and declared him to be in the right. Is Walesa a bad socialist? He is certainly an anti-Stalinist. He seeks to destroy the hierarchical, centralized, authoritarian, police-ridden communist order. But he does this precisely with the goal and perspective that moves to the truth of socialism. He calls into question the deviations, lies, and oppressions of socialism, *not socialism itself*. That is, Walesa does not wish to return the principal means of production to private control. On the contrary, he wishes those involved in production to exercise control (and not a State and Party administration to replace administration by cartels). He does not wish to reopen the question of

the path to social justice. On the contrary: he emphasizes it by demanding suppression of the unjust privileges of members of the Party and of the *Nomenklatura*. He does not reopen the question of union power, but he refuses to let the union be an organ of the State and administration, so that the union can become again a free association defending the freedom of workers. He does not reopen the question of socialist planning. On the contrary, he demands that planning be truly socialist, that is, that it be based on the real demands of people, and not on bureaucratic decisions. Everything he demands corresponds to a truer socialism than that of Stalin. There is nothing anti-Christian in all this. Quite the contrary.

Moreover, Christians must consider the following: in the past forty years, only two attempts with genuinely new methods sought to get the world out of its impasse (and not to resolve the economic crisis—the situation is

much graver!), to find a new way which belongs neither to capitalism nor communism nor the Third World, were both made in communist countries: Radovan Richta's in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Lech Walesa's in Poland in 1980. In other words, these two methods were created from the harsh *communist* experience, as an attempt to go beyond it, to take the greatest advantage of technical progress by placing this progress in the service of the most humble and weak, to balance the excess of power by a return to human values. In the capitalist world in the past forty years, absolutely *nothing* new has been discovered in the political or economic sphere—neither the reorganization of society, nor the incarnation of Christian values, nor the better utilization of science, nor progress toward peace: *nothing*. The two fundamentally new methods are linked to socialism. In Richta's case, an intellectual foundation taking seriously humanistic values. In the case of Lech Walesa, the foundation is practical syndicalism and authentic Christian inspiration.

We should think about this.



III FAILURE AND VICTORY

Of course there is an easy objection. Walesa is beaten. He is in prison. The movement is blocked. A government following Moscow's orders has been installed. Failure. Brute power won. Proof again that the policy Walesa followed is doomed. Impossible, both in methods and goals. So the arguments go: Impossible in its *methods*: non-violence. In the long run, non-violence is always beaten by the adversary, unless non-violence turns into violence. Even Gandhi was killed by violence, and his successor (who bears his name) bases the power of India on violence. We remember the

American black movement, starting with the non-violence of Martin Luther King, Jr., finished with the Black Muslims and the Black Panthers. In Poland, violence did not halt the movement, but the police, the Army, the USSR were victorious. Impossible in its *goals*: an "anarchistic" society, organized by certain activists with its tradition as base, as the starting point, so that it can function as a unit divided into small units, in which each group makes decisions autonomously. This produced (as in Czechoslovakia) an enormous disorder, a lowering of production and of living standards, even sporadic famine. This, of course, led the

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way to Soviet intervention. This way of organization is "utopian," chimerical, with no possibility of success, and even if the Russians had not intervened, it had failed. So the judgment runs against Walesa's efforts.

Now, my claim is that these judgments are wrong. It is obvious that, at the beginning of such a venture as Lech Walesa's, when the power of decision passes to *groups* (instead of a "director") and to the *base*, some disorder, some incoherence, an obvious reduction in production, and distribution will certainly occur. Time, patience, the acceptance of austerity are needed to establish a model of a new society. This is true for any new society. Did everything work well in the United States at the end of the 18th century, immediately after Independence? Did things work well when France passed from a Monarchy to a Republic? And the beginnings of the Russian Revolution: four years were required to achieve an approximate degree of order, and fifteen years to reach the level of production of 1914! These arguments against Lech Walesa are not valid.



On the contrary, I would say that the crisis in Poland was being resolved more rapidly. In Czechoslovakia in 1968, the experiment begun in January gradually produced a new type of organization in May, and did not, as was widely believed, produce total disorder. In Poland, the same thing happened. Evidence shows that disorder lasted six months, and that a new, satisfactory organization was gradually being established. If there was a famine, we should not forget that it was deliberately provoked by the Polish government itself as a means of fighting *Solidarity*. What is important here is

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that in these two cases, as long as the "revolutionary" process of social change was apparently failing, the Soviets did nothing. The Soviets expected everything to collapse. They intervened only when they judged, correctly, that success, not collapse, was in the offing, that gradually local authorities were being installed and were becoming competent, that problems began to be solved because power was truly passing to *the base*.

This the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics could not tolerate. Indeed, a success of this kind is exactly the negation of *everything* the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is, does, and wishes. What they saw was a model of society that is the inverse of the Russian model in everything, and yet cannot be indicted as capitalistic or reactionary. On the contrary, these Poles and Czechs moved *beyond* Soviet communism and the Soviets became from this moment on the model of archaic, outmoded communism, to demonstrate their failure (except, of course, in armaments!). This is the reason for the intervention of the USSR in Poland, and not, as has often been written in the West, the problem of the Soviet *glacis*, of the *satellites*, of the *Soviet bloc* which must not be split. These are the arguments of Western politicians, stupidly or willfully incapable of understanding the real problem of Soviet communism.

The basic question for Soviet communism is *not* that of power, that is, of *their* rule over one country or another. No. It is one of *legitimacy*: our regime (the USSR) is the *only* true, just, and good regime. *The only legitimate regime. Are we Soviets right* to be what we *are*? Is our model of society the most satisfying? This is the real, central, the only question for all Soviet administrators, even for Mr. Brezhnev. A "going beyond" the Soviet model is unforgiveable because it is a model of society which is *more* democratic, *more* socialist, *more* popular, *more* progressive! This is intolerable to the Soviets. At the very moment when such a model risks success it is destroyed by force.

This is the key to the problem, the heart of the matter. The "failure" of Lech Walesa does not stem from the impossibility of carrying out what was planned. On the contrary, because there was always a risk of success, a brutal military intervention and the re-imposition of force took place in Poland. We must be clear: the success of Walesa and *Solidarity's* model for socialism and democracy, its popularity and progressivism is intolerable to the Soviets and their servants in Poland.



Nevertheless, people say, whatever the reason, Lech Walesa and *Solidarity* failed. Here again I disagree. It is obvious that, confronted by a reaction of pure violence by the Soviet-Polish regime, a non-violent movement can either transform itself into a violent movement and be destroyed by organized, bureaucratic, indeed international violence. Or the movement can collapse, hopeless before this adversary.

In Walesa's experiment, *neither* happened. This is Lech Walesa's success. First of all, it is extraordinary that the members of *Solidarity* did not react violently against the police, the Polish Army, and the Soviet presence directing the repression. There were only two explosions, two violent confrontations. As for the rest, occupations of factories and mines, silent manifestations, meetings immediately dispersed. This self-mastery is impressive, all the more so since Lech Walesa was no longer there. Here is an extraordinary evidence of training in non-violence. I believe this also was the consequence of an awakened Christian faith. The result of this perseverance in non-violence was that, except in unusual cases, the Polish army did not intervene, the police behaved with moderation. Only the militia behaved with brutality and even then in a very limited manner. I must emphasize here that the non-violence of one side, properly carried out, prevents the other side from using the violent means it possesses. This astounding experience of the first year of repression demonstrates that non-violence (and how difficult it is not to give way to anger, legitimate self-defense, etc. etc.) *disarms* violence. Yes, I know that I shall be instructed that there is no point in using powerful methods against an adversary who will not defend himself and who is therefore beaten in advance! This is a false argument.

One should recall that the cause of black Americans progressed as long as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s non-violence was followed. Everything collapsed with the violence of the Black Muslims and Black Panthers. From that moment on, the State decreed itself free to use any and all means of power at its command. The destruction of violent revolutionary organizations came quickly, easily, efficiently accomplished. The power of the State is always compromised when dealing with non-violent people. I invoke also the example of the Algerian War. France had won the Algerian War militarily in 1960. The Army of the FLN was annihilated. Resistance was impossible. *But* public opinion inside France was won over by the action of pacifist movements; the French people became disgusted by the war. The pressure of public opinion, created only by pacifists, proved intolerable for the French government (at the same time under the pressure of international public opinion). This non-violent pressure forced the French government to give up in Algeria. Therefore, I propose that from the pedagogical viewpoint Lech Walesa was extraordinarily successful in convincing the Polish workers' world about non-violence.

The second aspect of Walesa and *Solidarity's* success is a consequence of the actions of the regime installed by the Soviets. General Wojciech Jaruzelski was forced to employ the usual Soviet police methods, establish martial law, arrest Walesa and *Solidarity* leaders, cut telephone communication within and outside Poland, in an effort to crush the movement. Jaruzelski's regime appears to everyone (except the Soviets, but not all of their satellites) as all the more illegitimate, unjust, unacceptable. Walesa and *Solidarity's* use of non-violence exposes the weakness of a lying, unjust regime: in a violent insurrection, the victor and his tactic seem justified; in a non-violent confrontation, the regime appears as an aggressor if it uses repression.



Yes, but you will say, this is perhaps a moral victory, it may satisfy our conscience, our compassion, our agonies, but it does not prevent the conqueror from prevailing. The world remains the world: power is power; money is still money; banks and business and trade and international loans continue. Walesa is a prisoner; *Solidarity* underground, perhaps destroyed.

There also I disagree, for two reasons. I am fully aware of the fact that Hitler won in 1933 and Franco in 1937. We must understand *Solidarity* is a movement toward a different type of society, a different organization, started by Lech Walesa, and continues today. There has been a profound convulsion which cannot be ignored, now that all Poles know there is another possibility, another way out, another possible society. What I mean is: we do not see here in Poland, in Lech Walesa and *Solidarity*, a fitful, spontaneous revolt against oppression, a popular demonstration of anger, a riot excusing State repression to impose an end to rebellion. Lech Walesa's movement is the reverse. At the beginning, Walesa and *Solidarity* made a plan for society, a new organization of the unions, then of the political administration, then of the Communist Party itself. The means to accomplish the program were set in motion by Walesa and *Solidarity*.

Repression of the Polish people, *Solidarity* and Walesa can for years prevent the fulfillment of their plan. But the idea and the hope persists. It lives in the beliefs and thoughts of the Polish people, Walesa and *Solidarity*. It is exactly the same as the hope for democracy in the heart of all dictatorial regimes.

This movement is today deeply implanted in Poland. It is not a vague hope for freedom. It is the conviction that the Soviet-installed regime is not necessary because another and true alternative exists, known and already tested by the Polish base. Lech Walesa was able to persuade the Poles, and, thanks to the Christian base of which I spoke, this is one aspect of his victory, his calm, controlled power.

The second aspect of Walesa's victory is this: We must acknowledge, indeed, confess that *Solidarity* continues to live. The events of late August and early September are witness to *Solidarity's* life. Its leaders are in prison, but after a period of hesitation everything has been re-initiated in secret. There is a fundamental lack of intelligence in those Europeans and Americans who say: "*Solidarity* was not at all prepared for a secret struggle, it organized nothing to resist the *coup d'Etat* and police repression, had not planned to become a secret movement. Therefore *Solidarity's* cause is lost." This judgment does not understand *Solidarity*. Obviously the passage from open defiance to secrecy could not be "planned" and "organized". This would have been the action of a "Headquarters," a Central Administration of *Solidarity*. There is no such "Central Administration." Walesa refused to have a Central Administration to organize the place of *Solidarity* in

Poland. What Walesa did was much more profound. He succeeded in making each local group assume responsibility for itself, its tasks, its actions. Thus, after the Dictator's *coup* by force what happened? In the early months, obviously, to the extent that Walesa was no longer there, there was vacillation, impotence, a tendency to give up. This was to be expected. But, and this is critical, a movement centralized and organized around a leader, dependent on him, would have collapsed (if Hitler had been killed in 1933, the whole of Nazism would have disappeared). Lech Walesa gave *Solidarity* a theory which taught local groups to live their own lives, so the passage to clandestine action was much easier than if there had been a program and tactic imposed by Walesa and a "Central Administration." The groups of *Solidarity*, the workers and peasants, began to live and function, distinct from each other. A clandestine movement was reconstituted from the base.



It now seems that Poland is again covered by a network of groups not resisting directly but reorganized on the basis of decentralization, demanding a new trade union movement parallel to the official Communist one. We know *Solidarity* publishes several dozen newspapers, which each union produced spontaneously. This was possible only because of the orientation towards true decentralization. The more the base groups assume entire responsibility, the more impossible it is to destroy such a movement.

In conclusion, I propose that Lech Walesa's action was a true victory from three points of view: the lesson of non-violence preserved even in crisis, the demonstration that repressive power is morally illegitimate, the lesson of individual responsibility thanks to decentralization. This was a success only to the extent that the Christian Lech Walesa awakened the Christian faith of his compatriots, who draw from this faith the courage and hope to go on living.

Postscriptum
October 17, 1982

On October 8, 1982, the government of Poland accomplished one more act of warfare against *Solidarity*. I shall make three observations.

First, the decision has certain political meanings. The Polish regime has acknowledged its failure. This is the only way to interpret the decision to declare *Solidarity* an illegal union. Whenever the Polish government repeats and intensifies harsh measures it means the government is being defeated by *Solidarity*. But it can also mean that the government is baiting *Solidarity* and other illegal unions to commit rash and imprudent actions. For example, to move to unorganized violence (this almost worked recently at Gdansk), thereby creating an excuse for the regime to begin military operations and issue thousands of indictments against workers and citizens.

Second, we must note the contradiction in the terms of the edict outlawing *Solidarity*. The edict announces important freedoms to the "official" unions. At the same time it not only abolishes *Solidarity* but all other unions not sponsored by the government, and also forbids their re-constitution. The result is extra-ordinary for the current Polish government, because *in principle* syndicalism has greater sanction in Poland under the edict than in other Communist bloc states!

Third, the Polish government's decision to outlaw *Solidarity* will not change anything. *Solidarity* has already gone underground. It will not be changed by the edict. The edict merely "legalizes" what was already a fact. This was not wise on the part of the Polish regime. It is useless against *Solidarity* and will result in more opposition and anger among the Polish people. The very structure of *Solidarity* makes the edict useless. *Solidarity* consists of small autonomous groups, each responsible for its own actions but at the same time having principles in common from which they make judgments and decisions. *Solidarity* is a "state of mind" (*etat d'esprit*)—it is not only *ideological* but *idealizing*, as the title "*Solidarity*" implies. These ethical and ideological elements account for the fact that the decisions made by *Solidarity* after the edict are neither incoherent nor contradictory. The link among the groups is extremely flexible: *Solidarity* is decentralized, and there is no cadre of leaders on which everything depends.

To destroy *Solidarity's* network would require re-establishing the system of concentration camps and imprisoning masses of workers and citizens. This is the strength of an organization founded on the initiative of *the base*. *Solidarity* is united not by structures but by a program with a clear vision of relating "the end and the means." □

Solidarity

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