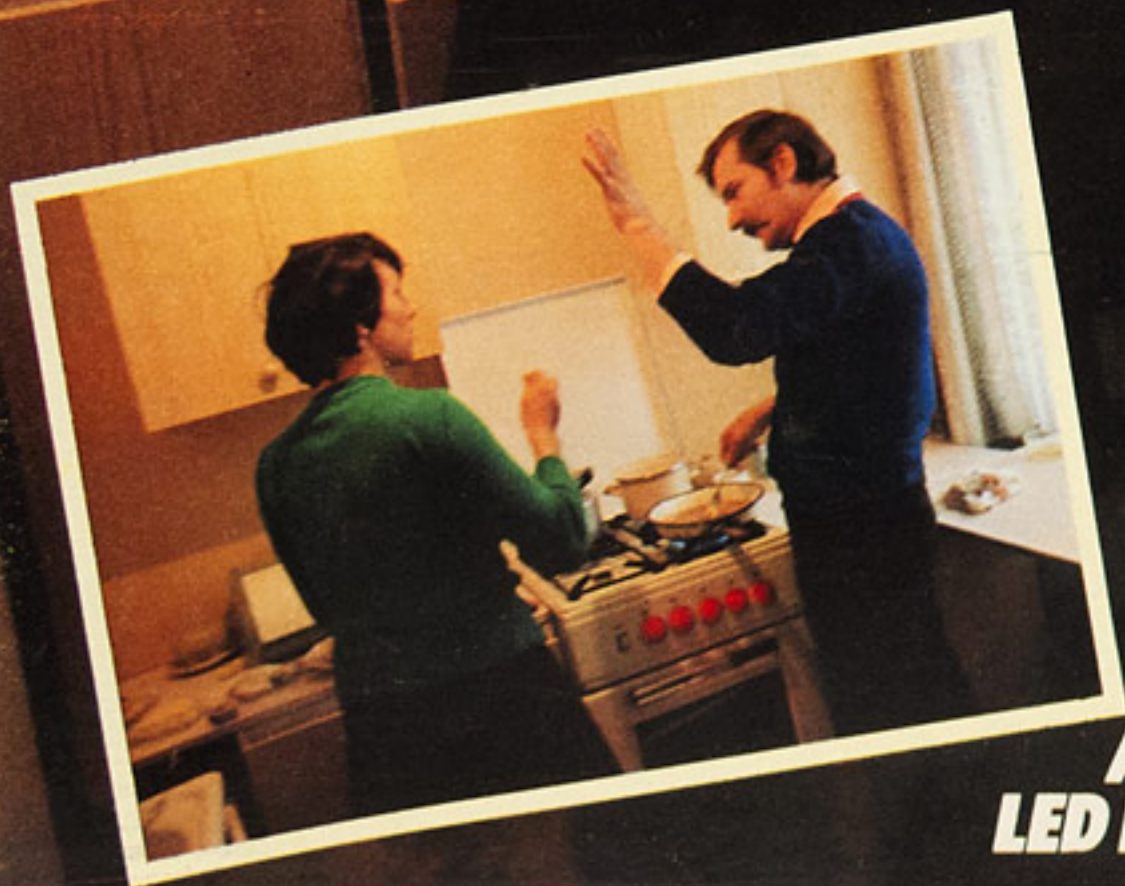


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**AT HOME: THE MAN WHO
LED POLAND'S REVOLUTION**

In Poland the Communist nations face the first major defection from their ranks. The Poles draw inspiration in this modern struggle from deep in their past. The Roman Catholic Church and the desire for national independence in this almost mediaeval landscape are old and powerful forces

Poland's Catholicism dates back to the 10th century. It was never challenged by the Reformation. Eighty per cent. of Poles are practising Catholics, a figure that is perhaps not equalled even in Latin America.

The influence of figures like Stefan, Cardinal Wyszynski, the Primate, was reinforced by the election of a Polish Pope. Anna Walentynowicz is the 51-year-old crane driver whose sacking led to the August strikes in the Gdansk shipyards, and the consequent growth of the free union movement. She says that: "After he became Pope, every Pole held his head high. We were no longer just a nation of drunkards and scroungers."

Rebellion and anti-Russian feeling are also Polish traditions. Marx wrote that the country was the "thermometer of the intensity and vitality of all revolutions since 1798".

Poland has periodically been engorged by her neighbours. Catherine the Great swallowed part of the country in the First Partition of Poland in 1772. If the Russians were unloved before, they have been hated since. Two later Partitions put more than half the country under Russian rule. There were bloody anti-Tsarist revolts up to 1914.

The new Polish independence that emerged after the First War was speedily killed off in the Second. Nazi Germany invaded from the West in 1939, and Soviet Russia moved in to take Eastern Poland. The Russians subsequently massacred 15,000 Polish Army officers at Katyn Forest in 1940. Though the Russians have tried to blame the Germans, no Pole believes the Nazis were responsible for this particular atrocity.

By 1947 Poland was firmly under a Communist government, and was a Russian satellite. The Poles never resigned themselves to either. They persistently refused to submit to land collectivisation. As a result, 70 ➡



POLAND: LIVING NEXT TO THE BEAR

Special photo report
by Marc Riboud



A priest (above) visits a sick peasant woman and her mother (right): "This is what 35 years of Socialism has done for the old," he says. Conditions in the country are poor (bottom right). Many of the young quit home for the big cities, leaving the old to stage their traditional funerals (below)



per cent. of the land is privately owned, divided into small family-farmed strips. It is a mediaeval, peasant landscape in a modern, Communist state.

Communism has made equally little impact in the cities. A recent poll shows that three per cent. of the country would vote Communist given a free choice. The pollsters found that 34 per cent. would vote Christian Democrat, 27 per cent. Socialist, 19 per cent. Liberal, and Farmers' Party, four per cent.

The Poles are more circumspect in their dealings with the Russians. If you live next to a bear, you do not go out of your way to upset it or insult it. That is not the same thing as liking it. The thousands of candles lit to commemorate the dead at Katyn show the quieter way in which the Poles express their feelings.

No system could be expected to work in the face of such anti-path. Poland is no exception: the system has failed. The country owes \$20 billion in hard currency abroad. There are shortages of virtually all essentials. Corruption and bribery are rampant. Communist Party officials either jump the queue for luxuries, or take a rake-off selling them to non-Party members.

The fuse of revolt has been burning for many years. In 1970 at least 55 shipyard workers were shot dead during rioting in Gdansk. Although wages were increased, and Party boss Wladyslaw Gomulka was sacked, the tensions were not lanced. There were further riots in July 1976 against increases in food prices.

The movement that grew in Gdansk last August had strong roots. Its leader, Lech Walesa, dates his determination to achieve union



freedom from the 1970 shootings.

Walesa himself said a year ago: "I'm sure that we'll get free trade unions in this country one day – but not in my lifetime." Yet, by last November, the free trade union Solidarity had at least 10 million members in a country of 35 million. Perhaps it had more. "I don't really know how many people we have," said Walesa. "Almost everybody, I suppose." Solidarity made sweeping political gains, including the individual's right to strike and to join a free, independent and non-political trade union.

Part of Solidarity's strength has been its refusal to deal in dogma. It has been pragmatic. It does not attack the Polish Communist Party, nor the Russians, so much as ignore them. Walesa has been a compromiser. "I have to change day by day," he has said. ➡ 34



A mass meeting of peasants joins the free trade union, Solidarity (above). They are in a village hall six miles from the Russian border in the south-east of Poland. The song of liberation they are singing was written in 1910, during another period of Russian domination by the Tsars. A Solidarity speaker, sporting a fashionable Walesa-style moustache (right), has little difficulty in getting recruits. Since its start in the Gdansk shipyards in August, 10 million of the 35 million Poles have joined. Like the country itself, Solidarity is intensely Catholic: the crucifix has replaced portraits of Lenin at union meetings. Crucifixes, ironically together with toy Russian rockets, sell briskly (far left). Priests have noted that middle-aged Government security men are hedging their bets on the future by being baptised. Solidarity is clear about its likes: freedom, independence and faith. It is much more circumspect about its dislikes. Left, candles are placed in memory of the 15,000 Polish officers shot by the Soviets in the Katyn Forest in 1940. But the Solidarity leaders seldom mention the Russians by name, only inference. An opinion poll shows that the Poles have little more affection for Communism than for the Russians. Only three per cent. said they would vote Communist in a free election. But the leaders do not attack Communist dogma. Caution is their hallmark.





Horses on the Cracow-Warsaw motorway (above). The Palace of Culture (right) was presented to Warsaw by Stalin. Far right, old aristocrats linger in a Cracow café

"Sometimes I have to calm the radicals. Other times, I encourage the fearful."

He has avoided politics, and stuck on the firmest ground in Poland, Catholicism. "I am a union man and not a Socialist. My religion helps now – it has helped me all my life. A man without religion is a dangerous man and without religion I would be a dangerous man." Speeches have been practical, dealing with food shortages, wages, hospital schemes, pensions. Thus Marian Jurczyk, a union leader from Szczecin, said of the Communists: "We are not enemies. We only want the women to forget the word 'queue'."

Walesa has been the natural leader. He kept the impetus going after the first strikes in Gdansk, which merely sought to have Anna Walentynowicz reinstated, and a £17-a-month pay increase. Important help has come from KOR, a group of dissidents led by Jacek Kuron.

But, as the Russians and the Polish Communist Party were well aware, Solidarity's main strength has been the massive support of the Polish people. It is fear of the Polish peoples' thirst for independence that governs Soviet moves to quench it. **Brian Moynahan**





Lech Walesa (above) with Magdalena, one of his six children, and his hero, the Pope. The former electrician has led the struggle for freedom since it began. He draws on his faith: "Without religion I would be a dangerous man"



The strikes started when Anna Walentynowicz (left) was sacked from her job as a crane operator in Gdansk for union activity. The protests swelled into the movement that toppled Party boss Edward Gierk. Government propaganda posters urging disarmament (right) are viewed with amusement



The near-collapse of the economy fuelled feeling against the régime. This queue (above) is for chocolate in Cracow. Poles queue for meat, bread, vegetables, newspapers. A joke says the authorities ordered meat shops to be three miles apart, so queues would not get mixed up. Jacek Kuron (right) is a key figure. He leads the Self-Defence Committee, KOR, which protects individual rights, publishes clandestine journals. His arrest for setting up a "criminal organisation" led to strikes, a new concept for which a word had to be coined (far right). He was released

