

‘Long live Poland!’ from Le Figaro (10 December 1990)

Caption: On 10 December 1990, the French daily newspaper Le Figaro considers the victory of Lech Walesa, founder of the Polish trade union Solidarnosc, in the first presidential elections held in post-Communist Poland.

Source: Le Figaro. 10.12.1990, n° 14 398. Paris: Le Figaro. "Vive la Pologne !", auteur:Desjardins, Thierry , p. 1.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/long_live_poland_from_le_figaro_10_december_1990-en-21a3aac5-48d2-42b2-9f45-00d9bcaf140a.html

Last updated: 05/07/2016



Long live Poland!

by **Thierry Desjardins**

Wałęsa's victory, of course, came as no surprise. It had been expected for several months, and nothing could surprise us any more in these Eastern European countries where everything is now possible, even the craziest of dreams. But what a wonderful story!

Everything happened so quickly that we have forgotten what took place only yesterday. Just nine years ago, when General Jaruzelski imposed a state of siege on Poland and arrested Wałęsa, who could have imagined for a moment that the latter would one day succeed the former following free elections in a 'de-communised' Poland, and all without a singled drop of blood being spilt? It almost makes you want to give thanks to the Black Madonna of Częstochowa.

For years, Wałęsa has been a symbol. He was a worker who worked in the Lenin Shipyard, believed in God, was fed up with communism and, with his bare hands, led a handful of friends against the tanks of Marxism commanded by a general in dark glasses. We thought he had no chance of winning since he was swimming against the tide of history. The most we were able to do, in order to salve our consciences, was award him the Nobel consolation prize.

Then history resumed its normal course and the Marxism that used to frighten us collapsed like a house of cards, and the symbol turned into a source of hope. Perhaps one day it will be written that it was this small labourer from Gdańsk who dealt the death blow to the Marxist-Leninist Empire. That would be an exaggeration, of course, but it was quite natural that the final revolt should flare up in Poland, with men like Karol Wojtyła and Lech Wałęsa. The Poles are not easy to deal with, and they believe in God. That helps!

Of course, now the rot will set in. When hope comes to power, it is stripped of its charm. For some time now we have been told that Wałęsa, the labourer, does not have the 'necessary training' to lead the fantastic revolution that Poland must lead if it wishes to emerge from the chaos and poverty that so many years of totalitarianism have bequeathed it. The same is being said of the writer Václav Havel in Prague.

We will see, but in any case, both are in a much better situation than the barely reconverted former party technocrats and the resistance fighters of the eleventh hour. They know the value of freedom and of a nation's dreams.

We are also told that Wałęsa, over the course of his struggles, has become terribly authoritarian and his victories have turned his head. But if this former electrician did not have a 'strong personality', could he have set up Solidarity, rejected all compromise and any sell-out that was offered him and today be the President of a free Poland?

He is also accused of being too close to a Church that is sometimes excessively conservative. But it is unquestionably the Church, and it alone, that has saved the Polish nation over these centuries that have seen it shunted from one border to another — sometimes without even being granted a scrap of land — and often drifting from one dictatorship to another.

So, on this morning, let us forget the future for a moment and make do with the words of Floquet: 'Long live Poland, sir!'