

## ‘Operation Belvedere’ from L’Humanité (26 June 1990)

**Caption:** On 26 June 1990, during the Presidential campaign for the successor to General Jaruzelski in Poland, the French Communist daily newspaper L’Humanité comments on the growing disagreement between Lech Walesa, First Secretary of Solidarnosc, and his former supporters.

**Source:** L’Humanité. Organe Central du Parti Communiste Français. 26.06.1990. Paris.  
[http://www.humanite.fr/1990-06-26\\_Articles\\_-OPERATION-BELVEDERE](http://www.humanite.fr/1990-06-26_Articles_-OPERATION-BELVEDERE). "Opération Belvédère", auteur:Piérot, Jean-Paul.

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**Last updated:** 05/07/2016



## Operation Belvedere

**Lech Wałęsa increasingly contested by his former friends. Sixty-three leaders of his movement condemn his authoritarianism. The campaign to find a successor to General Jaruzelski has started.**

By an irony of history, the split which has just riven Solidarity happened almost a year to the day after its overwhelming victory in the last general elections in Poland. In a halo of glory, Lech Wałęsa was coming from Gdańsk to Warsaw to hold negotiations with President Jaruzelski on the constitution of the future political power system and was already nurturing the hope of installing himself in the Belvedere, the residence of Poland's Heads of State.

Ever since, that dream has always been in the mind of the former electrician from the Lenin shipyards, who is ratcheting up the pressure on his former friends, now in government. Although theoretically General Jaruzelski's term of office only ends in 1995, the election campaign has well and truly started for a poll which could be brought forward to next year.

On Monday, Aleksander Hall, the Minister in the Mazowiecki cabinet responsible for relations with political parties, declared before more than 200 local officials from Solidarity that, despite his 'high regard' for Wałęsa, he did not think that he would be 'a good President of the Republic'. The previous day, at the meeting of the movement's Civic Committee, some even less kind remarks were made about the man who last April was re-elected leader of Solidarity by 77 % of the 469 delegates. Władysław Frasyniuk, who was once close to Wałęsa and chairs the regional committee in Wrocław, accused the organisation's top man of having turned the Civic Committee (the electoral wing of the trade union) into a 'court for a despot'.

The revolt was sparked off by 63 officials who wrote a letter calling for the dissolution of the Civic Committee, a structure set up in 1988 as a shadow cabinet when the United Workers' Party (PUWP) was still running the government. Among the signatories there also appeared the names of Bronisław Geremek, chairman of the parliamentary group, Adam Michnik, editor of *Gazeta* whom Lech Wałęsa recently ordered, in vain, to resign, Zbigniew Bujak and Jacek Kuroń.

At the heart of the disturbances are the ambitions and authoritarianism of Lech Wałęsa, who is currently trying his utmost to torpedo the work of Prime Minister Mazowiecki, whom he sees as a serious rival. In an interview with *Le Monde* on 10 June 1990, Wałęsa supported Mazowiecki, but in the way a rope supports a hanged man. 'I will go on supporting him because he is like Poland. Tired, worn out, deformed, he has difficulty breathing (...) As a trade unionist,' he said, 'I see things differently and on some issues I disagree with him completely. But in most cases I will be for him, because he's doing his best.'

Last Wednesday, in the columns of *Gazeta*, Lech Wałęsa hammered home his aspirations and his view of the role of a Polish President. 'I don't want to become President of the Republic but I have to.' The man is genuinely robed in the destiny of the saviour of the motherland. He will be 'a hatchet President'. He will have to 'shake up all those high society people in Warsaw'. As for Professor Geremek, another potential presidential candidate, 'he has no feel for politics'. Right now, we need 'to cut the tentacles off some people who are going too far'. To 'put things in order', Wałęsa says that he will provoke 'a storm, a war at the top'.

The trouble is that Lech Wałęsa's old lieutenants have acquired a taste for exercising power. They intend to fly with their own wings and cherish very high hopes when it comes to their political careers.

The upheavals rocking Solidarity's boat are not unrelated to the reshaping of the Polish political landscape against a background of falling living standards. Wałęsa advocates the emergence of political pluralism. He defines himself as belonging to the centre-right. He is sponsoring a new party, the union of the centre. Even though his popularity is no longer sky-high, Lech Wałęsa still speaks for a Catholic, populist Right. The gap between this trend and the reformist wing, which is social democratic and liberal in inspiration, the wing of Kuroń, Michnik and Geremek, is widening. These are the people Wałęsa accuses of being representatives of the 'secular left'. What is really missing from political life in Poland is a genuine party of the Left since the scuttling of the PUWP. In the local government elections in May, the PUWP's successor, Social Democracy

of the Republic of Poland, was virtually wiped out with a paltry score of 0.3 %.

The risks of conflict, not to say social explosion, are greater than ever. The economic programme the government is carrying through on the orders of the International Monetary Fund has cost the workers 30 % of their purchasing power in just a few months. The number of people unemployed is likely to reach a million by the end of this year. Although the supply system, which used to be so bad, has improved greatly, it is harder for most people to get hold of goods, which adds to their frustration. Lech Wałęsa, like the wily politician he is, would like to play on the discontent and turn it to his own advantage with his sights on a single target: the Belvedere.