

DIOCESAN NEWS

Walesa calls for intellectual victory over terror

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — If the United States wants to write its own story of defeating terrorism, it should consider taking a page from the history of Poland's struggle against communism, according to Lech Walesa, Poland's former president and the leader of its famed Solidarity union.

Poland was surrounded by 1 million Warsaw Pact troops, as well as occupied by 250,000 Soviet soldiers during the Cold War, Walesa told two different audiences at St. John Fisher College Oct. 4.

"Nobody believed that the defeat of communism was possible," he said, adding that those nonbelievers included most U.S. leaders. "But we defeated this monstrous system without a single shot."

Walesa spoke to faculty and students in the afternoon in Haffey Hall, and to at least 1,000 people at night in the Student Life Center. Both speeches essentially covered terrorism, Solidarity, globalization and the creation of a peaceful world.

Walesa, who spoke through a translator, said he is on a two-month speaking tour in the United States, to be with the people in the current crisis.

"All I know is that the American people were in solidarity with the Polish people when we were fighting, and all the Polish people and myself are going to be in solidarity with you now," he said to a round of applause in the Student Life Center.

By uniting millions in a nonviolent struggle, Solidarity was able to achieve an intellectual victory over communism, he noted. Such a victory is possible in the U.S.-led war against terrorism, he said, which would be best won by creating a world where no one considers terrorism a viable method of seeking change. He added that the best outcome for such a war would be if the terrorists' compatriots actually betrayed them and turned them over to U.S. forces because they don't want the entire world as their enemies.

"I consider these people mad and insane," he said of the terrorists. "We must isolate them from the sane community."

Walesa noted that he himself was often tempted to resort to violence when he was fighting communism.

"Actually, I used more force to stop myself from (violence)," he said. "But that's why the victory was so great."

Walesa credited Solidarity's victory to



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Irena and Piotr Szablowski of St. Stanislaus Parish, Rochester, listen to former President of Poland Lech Walesa speak Oct. 4 at St. John Fisher College.

several factors, including the support of the Catholic Church and Pope John Paul II. He said that the pope should be given "51 percent" of the credit for Solidarity's victory, particularly because he visited Poland in 1979 a year after Solidarity was formed. This visit, Walesa said, bolstered the spirit of the Poles and helped to increase Solidarity's membership from "10 people to 10 million."

He added that Solidarity should be given "30 percent" of the credit for the end of communism in Europe, and that Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet leader, and Boris Yeltsin, the former Russian president, both played a vital role as well in toppling the communist system.

Walesa said that when he was imprisoned by the communists in the early 1980s, they offered him many material temptations to sell out his cause. But his Catholic faith helped him to withstand these temptations, he said.

"If I were without my faith, I would consider myself totally helpless," he said.

He commented that the Catholic Church had helped keep Polish nationalism alive for centuries, even through brutal Russian and German occupations. The church's somewhat diminished social status in the post-communist era has happened only because dissidents no longer need to turn to the church for a place to

express their ideas, he said. However, it was the church that gave those dissidents refuge during times of tyranny, he said.

In response to a question about Poland's current high unemployment rate and dire economic situation, Walesa said that Poland is still "sick" after communism, and that the United States failed to invest its aid wisely in post-communist Europe. For example, he said, the United States gave millions of dollars away to people in such countries as Russia who turned out to be crooks. The United States would do better to funnel its money through its own conscientious business leaders who could invest its funds in Poland and Russia wisely, he said.

He added that while he had qualms about globalization and the dismantling of market barriers around the world, he believed that the advent of computers and cellular phones made borders obsolete and globalization unstoppable. Anti-globalization advocates would better spend their energies creating structures that ensure justice for workers, he said.

On that note, he said the United States might be better off investing money in job creation for both U.S. and Mexican citizens than in maintaining a border with Mexico and keeping out illegal aliens. He added that he supported creation of a federation of Europe and North America. And he said, with a smile, that he would like to be its president.

Despite his involvement in tremendous historic events, Walesa continually made jokes at his own expense, and treaded lightly on several issues. He said that he had been awarded 20 times as many medals — including the Nobel Peace Prize — as the late Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev who was often photographed wear-



Walesa laughs during his speech.

ing wear a mound of ribbons and medals on his suit jacket. Walesa said it would take a crane to lift him onstage were he to wear the various medals and other awards bestowed upon him.

He called Cuba "the Jurassic Park" of communism, and predicted that communism would eventually collapse in China and Vietnam as well because it is not truly "progressive."

Several audience members at the Student Life Center were from the Rochester Polish community, and would often laugh at Walesa's remarks before the rest of the audience heard the English translation. One such member was Father Adam Ogorzaly, pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish in Rochester since 1997. The priest said prayers at a luncheon with Walesa earlier in the day.

The 42-year-old priest said that he had to keep his desire to be a priest a secret in communist Poland lest the government find out and draft him into the army to keep him from his vocation.

In 1979, as a first-year seminarian, Father Ogorzaly attended an outdoor Mass with the pope in the city of Gniezo. He added that the pope's visit combined with Walesa's activism to give Poles courage to stand up to the Soviets. He said he remembered that some of his friends joined Solidarity after the pope's visit.

"I was scared, but happy, too, because Solidarity was growing bigger and bigger," Father Ogorzaly said.

Walesa was a hero to the priest not simply because of his politics.

"He was a Catholic, too," the priest said of Walesa. "He always put his trust in the Blessed Mother, and he received support from the Catholic Church."

Men killed in attacks remembered

Memorial services for two men killed in the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City were held in the Rochester Diocese over the Oct. 6-7 weekend.

More than 300 people attended a memorial service for Thomas William Duffy at St. Thomas More Church, Brighton, Oct. 6. Mr. Duffy, 52, a Pittsford resident, was senior vice president at Marsh Inc., a risk management insurance and employee benefit consultation company that works with the energy industry. Mr. Duffy had an appointment at the World Trade Center the morning of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Father James A. Schwartz, pastor of Mr. Duffy's home parish of St. Louis, Pittsford, eulogized Mr. Duffy at the service, which was held at St. Thomas More because of ongoing renovation at St. Louis.

"He was a very faithful, regular parishioner whose faith was very much a part of his life," Father Schwartz said.

Contributions in Mr. Duffy's memory may be sent to the Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, c/o Red Cross, P.O. Box 30140, Rochester, NY 14603-3140; The Saints' Place, 46 S. Main St., Pittsford, 14534; or to Catholic Charities Inc., 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY 14624.

A memorial service was held Oct. 7 at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Mendon for Brandon J. Buchanan, 24, who worked

for Cantor Fitzgerald on the 104th floor of the World Trade Center's north tower. He was a 1995 graduate of McQuaid Jesuit High School and also graduated from the University of Vermont.

Mr. Buchanan "certainly lived life to the fullest," said Father Frederick Betti, McQuaid's chairman of religious studies. The priest taught Mr. Buchanan and presided at his memorial service.

"Whenever you met him, it was a very uplifting experience," Father Betti said.

Contributions in Mr. Buchanan's memory may be sent to the University of Vermont, Brandon J. Buchanan Memorial Scholarship Fund, c/o Dean Snider, Development & Alumni, Grasse Mt. 411 Main St., Burlington, VT 05401.

— Rob Cullivan

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