

Central Connecticut
State University
New Britain, Connecticut

Robert C. Vance
Distinguished Lecture Series

presents



Lech Walesa

April 10, 1996

8 p.m.

Welte Hall

Solidarity

Lech Walesa

President of Poland, 1990-1995

Chairman, Solidarity Trade Union, 1980-1981, 1990



Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity (Solidarnosc)--the first independent labor union in the Communist bloc-- was born on Sept. 27, 1943 in Popowo, Poland. His father spent the war years in a German labor camp and the young Walesa grew up in a country dominated by the totalitarian Soviet Union.

Trained in a state vocational school, he worked as an electrician at the Lenin shipyards in the Baltic port of Gdansk. Walesa married Danuta Mirosława in 1969, and they are the parents of eight children.

After witnessing the 1970 massacre of scores of shipyard workers protesting price rises, Walesa determined to campaign for the workers' rights. When mass strikes erupted in 1980, Walesa altered history by climbing over the shipyard wall to convince 17,000 workers to remain on strike until their economic and political demands were met. Elected head of the strike committee, he negotiated the signing of the historic Gdansk Agreement recognizing the workers' right to organize freely.

In his autobiographical books, **A Way of Hope** and **The Struggle and the Triumph**, Lech Walesa relates the story of Solidarity. During 16 months as a legal entity, Solidarity represented some 10 million Poles and drew support from Pope John Paul II and Western nations. Walesa himself, a devout Roman Catholic, espoused a Western-style democracy in a "market-socialist" economy.

But then in 1981 the Communist party attempted to suppress Solidarity. Martial law was imposed, thousands of trade unionists arrested, and Lech Walesa was held in confinement for nearly a year. Attempts to discredit Walesa by the regime failed, and he remained a respected human-rights figure, being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983--the year martial law was lifted.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, Lech Walesa pressed for democratic elections and for economic reforms. Inaugurated in 1990 as the first non-communist president in postwar Polish history, Walesa scored a great success in overseeing the withdrawal of Russian troops stationed in Poland since the end of World War II.

After five years as Poland's President, Lech Walesa, the worker, creator of Solidarity, has returned to his roots as a shipyard electrician in his hometown of Gdansk having earned an honored place in Polish and world history.

Program

OpeningRichard L. Judd
Vice President for University Affairs

WelcomeMerle W. Harris
Interim President, Central Connecticut State University

GreetingsHerbert E. Carlson, Jr., *Chairperson*
Robert C. Vance Charitable Foundation

Polish Melodies

Polonia-Paderewski Choir, New Britain, CTWaldemar Ciesielski
Music Director

CitationStanislaus Blejwas, *Director Polish Studies Center*
Kathy A. Martin, *CCSU Faculty Senate President*

Conferral of Honorary DegreeLawrence D. McHugh, *Chairman*
Board of Trustees for Connecticut State University

Introduction of Lech WalesaMerle W. Harris

Lecture PresentationThe Honorable Lech Walesa

Audience Participation

Central Connecticut State University and the CCSU Foundation gratefully acknowledge the Robert C. Vance Charitable Foundation, Tilcon, Inc., and the Connecticut Light & Power Company for their support of tonight's program. Special thanks to Dr. Stanislaus A. Blejwas and Mrs. Elizabeth Wasitutynski for their counsel and guidance in arranging tonight's program.



ROBERT CUMMINGS VANCE, a widely respected journalist, served as editor and publisher of *The Herald* in New Britain from 1951 to 1959. A staunch supporter of Central Connecticut State University, he served many years on its Citizen's Committee and was instrumental in naming the Elihu Burritt Library. A campus residence, Robert C. Vance Hall, is named in his honor.



**The Robert C. Vance Distinguished Lecture Series is a
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