

John Paul II Helped Topple Berlin Wall

Former Polish President Reflects on Pope's Role

By Angela Reddemann

BERLIN, Germany, NOV. 11, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- During celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a human rights activist and former Polish president recalled the essential contribution of Pope John Paul II.

Lech Walesa, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and co-founder of the Polish labor union Solidarity (Solidarnosc), affirmed this Monday in Berlin at the celebration of the day East and West Germany were reunified.

He stated that the future of a united Europe should be built on the foundation of truth, not on lies. With this assertion, he added that the historical truth was that freedom for East Germany was not due to politicians alone.

"Truth is very important when we speak of the course of history," said Walesa. He suggested that the fall of the Iron Curtain was due in a large part to Pope John Paul II and the Solidarity labor movement.

Although the anniversary celebrations took place in the rain, smiles were on the faces of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and hundreds of others as they walked across the bridge of Bornholmer Strasse, one of the first border crossings opened in 1989. Merkel said it was one of the happiest moments of her life.

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev also walked across the old border, along with Walesa, at the site where some 136 people were shot since the erection of the wall in 1961.

A visual presentation during Walesa's address depicted the visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland, and the effects of that visit on unifying Europe in freedom. The Polish Pontiff's trip to his native country in June of 1979 made a great impact, as it was the first visit of a Pope to a Communist country.

On June 4, 1979, John Paul II said to the representatives of the Communist regime: "Allow me, venerable gentlemen, to continue to consider Poland's interest as my own, and to participate in it as profoundly as if I still lived in this country and were a citizen of this nation."

Recalling those years, and the events that followed, Walesa affirmed, "Europe desperately needs the values that sparked this revolution."

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