

External Pressures on the USSR: Eastern Europe
b. Short-Term – Walesa and Pope John Paul II

Another cause for the decline and collapse of Soviet control over Eastern Europe is because the "**Solidarity**" movement in Poland – led by Lech Walesa and supported by the Polish Pope John Paul II - showed that it was possible to successfully rebel against communist control.



1970s: The Polish economy – like those of all countries in communist countries in Eastern Europe - went into recession and people's standard of living began to decline.

The Communist government reacted by putting up the price of food.

1979: The Pope visited Poland and inspired the people to start campaigning for better conditions. Soon afterwards, Lech Walesa founded the Solidarity Movement in the Gdansk shipyards. In the words of the historian Timothy Garton Ash, "Without the Pope, no Solidarity. Without Solidarity, no Gorbachev. Without Gorbachev, no fall of Communism."

1980: Strikes broke out all over the country, led by "Solidarity", which drew up a list of "21 Demands" for greater political and religious freedom.

1980: General Jaruzelski, the prime minister, held talks with Solidarity and agreed to their "21 Demands". By this time membership of Solidarity had reached 3.5 million.

1981: Jaruzelski introduced martial law and put Walesa and thousands of members of Solidarity in prison. This turned Walesa into a national hero: by the end of the year membership of Solidarity had trebled.

1982: Fearing a revolution, Jaruzelski released Walesa but his freedom was still restricted and he was practically under 'house arrest'.

1983: Pope John Paul II made another visit to Walesa in Poland to express his support for the Solidarity Movement. This was a propaganda disaster for Jaruzelski and the USSR. In 1992 Gorbachev reflected that "What has happened in Eastern Europe in recent years would not have been possible without the presence of this Pope, without the great role that he has played on the world scene".

1983-89: Over the next few years Jaruzelski gradually lost control of the country. Walesa and Pope John Paul II were a constant symbol of the USSR's unpopularity in Eastern Europe.

Task 1

1. Outline how each of the following three Polish people helped to undermine Soviet Control over Eastern Europe before Gorbachev came to power in 1985:

<p>a. Pope John Paul II</p> 	
<p>b. Lech Walesa</p> 	
<p>c. General Jaruzelski</p> 	

Discuss: Who was the most important of these characters, and why?

Sourcework

Source A: *General Jaruzelski speaking in 1995 in an interview with a Western author.*

At first the Soviets gave us an ultimatum: either bring the situation under control or we will cut off supplies of oil, gas and other raw materials. I was summoned three times to the Soviet Union. On the last occasion, in September 1981, I was shown army manoeuvres all along the Polish border. The Soviet army leader, Marshal Ustinov, informed me that what was happening in Poland was intolerable. We had to convince our allies that we would not undermine the Warsaw Pact or allow the state to be undermined. The introduction of martial law allowed us to avoid military intervention.

1. Why, according to Source A, did Jaruzelski suddenly take a firm line against Solidarity in 1981?

Source B: *A British Cartoon from 1982.*



2. Using your background knowledge to help you, explain the message of Source B.