



Andrzej Wajda: Portraits of History and Humanity

Wałęsa: Man of Hope

Wałęsa: Man of Hope Wałęsa. Człowiek z nadziei

Directed by: Andrzej Wajda

Co-produced by: Akson Studio, Orange, TVP –

Telewizja Polska S.A, NCK – National Center for Culture, Canal+

Co-financing by: Polish Film Institute

Sponsored by: Energa, Saur Neptun

Executive Producers: Katarzyna Fukacz-Cebula,

Malgorzata Fogel-Gabrys

Producer: Michal Kwiecinski

Screenplay: Janusz Glowacki

Director of Photography: Pawel Edelman

Editors: Grazyna Gradon, Milenia Fiedler

Production Designer: Magdalena Dipont

Costume Designer: Magdalena Biedrzycka

Make-up: Waldemar Pokromski, Tomasz Matraszek

Music: Pawel Mykietyń

Sound: Jacek Hamela

Cast:

Robert Wieckiewicz (*Lech Wałęsa*)

Agnieszka Grochowska (*Danuta Wałęsa*)

Zbigniew Zamachowski (*Nawisłak*)

Cezary Kosinski (*Majchrzak*)

Maria Rosaria Omaggio (*Oriana Fallaci*)

Miroslaw Baka

(*Klemens Gniech, director of the shipyard*)

Maciej Stuhr (*priest*)

Poland-France 2013

127 mins

Digital 4K

Most biopics about historical figures are made long after the subjects have died and by filmmakers who didn't directly know them. Andrzej Wajda's *Wałęsa: Man of Hope* is an exception to this general rule, since the venerable director (born in 1926) is almost 20 years older than shipyard electrician turned political leader Lech Wałęsa (born in 1943). Wajda lived through the seismic years of the 1970s and early 1980s in Poland, a period that culminated in free elections and the end of communist rule, and he has chronicled the upheaval and uncertainty of these times in *Man of Marble* (1977) and *Man of Iron* (1981). Wajda's last major feature *Katyn* (2007) was regarded by many as a likely final testament from one of the titans of Polish cinema. An account of the 1940 massacre of Polish officers by the Soviet authorities, it was received respectfully enough but was also thought by many to be old-fashioned. In 2009 he made the chamber piece *Sweet Rush*, but seemed too old and frail by then to tackle a project as demanding as the *Wałęsa* movie. What most impresses about *Man of Hope*, then, especially in its first half, is its energy, its abrasiveness. Wajda uses newsreel footage and punk music in his recreation of the protests of 1970, and there is grim footage of protesters being beaten up by the authorities. Wałęsa himself is arrested and made to sign documents saying that he will collaborate with the regime.

These scenes are seen in flashback. Janusz Glowacki's screenplay opens with Wałęsa giving an interview to celebrated Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci (Maria Rosaria Omaggio) in early 1981, and then slips seamlessly back in time. Robert Wieckiewicz gives a stirring performance as Wałęsa, capturing his bluntness and charisma. The film balances its account of the rise of free trade union Solidarity and the Gdansk shipyard strikes with insights into Wałęsa's family life. He is a happily married Catholic with several children who is continually shown combining his political duties with pushing his babies around in a pram. One aspect of 1970s Polish society that Wajda clearly knew at first hand is the censorship and surveillance. Wałęsa is constantly followed by the authorities; anyone who visits him, Fallaci included, is filmed. Wajda plays up the absurdism and Kafkaesque quality of life in the Polish communist state in its final years. Wałęsa is arrested on a regular basis, often seemingly with his baby in tow. His wife Danuta (the improbably glamorous Agnieszka Grochowska) is frequently caught up in his battles with the authorities too. In one scene, when their apartment is being searched by the cops, we see her hiding copies of an underground newspaper in a pan of stew that she's cooking on the stove. In another, when she is heading back from Norway after collecting the Nobel Peace Prize on Wałęsa's behalf, she is strip-searched purely to humiliate her.

At the same time that the family is being targeted by the communist authorities, it also suffers at the hands of the anti-communist protesters. After Wałęsa becomes Solidarity leader and a folk hero, the underground movement treats his tiny apartment as a meeting place. The media won't leave him alone either. In one comic scene, we see the Wałęsa family sitting down to watch an episode of American miniseries *Rich Man, Poor Man* on their battered old TV before the inevitable interruption occurs. The only way Lech and Danuta can safeguard their privacy is by hanging a sign on their front door warning of a typhus outbreak. Wałęsa's legacy is a matter of fierce debate. In recent years he has been heavily criticised for his remarks about everything from the Polish

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Andrzej Wajda: Portraits of History and Humanity

The Solidarity Trilogy: Wałęsa: Man of Hope

Wałęsa. Człowiek z nadziei

Sun 1 Mar 18:20; Mon 16 Mar 20:30

Korczak

Mon 2 Mar 19:10 (+ Q&A); Fri 13 Mar 20:45

Katyn Katyń

Thu 5 Mar 20:30; Tue 10 Mar 18:15 (+ pre-recorded

intro by film critic Carmen Gray)

The Conductor Dyrygent

Mon 9 Mar 17:50 (+ intro by film critic and scholar

Michał Oleszczyk)

Rough Treatment Bez znieczulenia

Mon 9 Mar 20:20 (+ intro by film critic and scholar

Michał Oleszczyk)

The Promised Land Ziemia obiecana

Wed 11 Mar 18:45 (+ Q&A with actor Daniel

Olbrychski)

Afterimage Powidoki

Thu 12 Mar 18:20; Wed 18 Mar 20:40

The Solidarity Trilogy: Man of Iron

Człowiek z żelaza

Sun 15 Mar 18:00

With thanks to

Marlena Łukasiak, Michał Oleszczyk,

Jędrzej Sabliński

Presented with the ICA and Ciné Lumière, who will also be hosting screenings of Wajda's works in February and March

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gay community's political rights to Poland's relationship with Germany. Wajda's film shows him at an earlier, simpler point in his political career, when all that concerned him was the fight against the authorities. *Man of Hope* captures his stubbornness and his courage. The intellectuals label him a 'working-class chauvinist' but he is far more effective than they are. Wałęsa, Wajda's movie suggests, was precisely the blunt tool needed to bring down the oppressive Soviet-backed communist state.

Geoffrey Macnab, *Sight and Sound*, January 2014

Andrzej Wajda on 'Wałęsa: Man of Hope'

I waited a long time before deciding to make a film about Lech Wałęsa, concluding the triptych *Man of Marble*, *Man of Iron*, and *Wałęsa: Man of Hope*. How was it possible that Lech Wałęsa became the leader first of a strike and then of the entire great Solidarity movement? The communist authorities could and wanted to speak only to the workers, because in their naivety they believed that workers were shaped by a system imported from the Soviet Union and that they could communicate with them. Therefore, an electrician in a shipyard – well, we can talk to him. Meanwhile, it turned out that an electrician, with a well-tanned back, knows what the labour system was like in a communist country, what the relationships were like, what the wages were like, is far more effective in negotiations with the communist authorities than any intellectual, be it Geremek or Mazowiecki. The point was precisely for the worker to tell the workers' authorities directly that they are not his. On behalf of all of Poland, he'll say, 'No!' I wanted to make a film about him. But I put it off until I realised that Lech Wałęsa couldn't be a hero in Poland, someone who played a magnificent role and then stood before the United States Congress to say, 'We, the people.' No! In Poland, the main accusations levelled against him are that he supposedly signed something and that he didn't prove himself as president. And why should he? Lech Wałęsa was the leader of the nation at a certain point, and there was no one else who could have played that role.

It was none other than Lech Wałęsa (and, of course, the strike committee) who created a completely new situation in Poland and forced the communist authorities to sign the agreement. He was aware that this would happen without bloodshed. Without yet another failed uprising.

Martial law destroyed all of this. For many years, it seemed that our cause was ultimately lost, but Solidarity was rebuilt, and we regained freedom and independence for our country without bloodshed. This is the great work of Lech Wałęsa.

In the film, I also showed what was perhaps the most difficult moment in his life: when, during martial law, he was transported by helicopter to Arłamów, right on the Soviet border. This meant he could be transported even further at any moment. He was deprived of his advisors and had to make his own decisions and demonstrate the wisdom of a true people's leader. Lech Wałęsa showed us our path to freedom.

Interview with Andrzej Wajda transcribed from materials prepared by Andrzej Wolski for the film *Wajda: A Cinematic Lecture* (2016), wajda.pl