

The Birth of Solidarity: Dynamics of a Social Movement

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The role that “Solidarity” has played in the history of Poland and the Eastern bloc remains a subject of dispute amongst historians. The controversy has been aptly identified by Anthony Kemp-Welch, who quoted Tony Judt’s opinion that independent trade unions “were not in themselves a harbinger of the downfall of communist Power,” and juxtaposed it with Martin Malia’s judgment, in which “Solidarity began the task of dismantling communism in 1980, eventually completed by Democratic Russia in 1991.”² When studying “Solidarity,” however, other questions are also worth asking. One of the most important is what did “Solidarity” stand for and who created and managed the movement?

After the end of World War II, Poland found itself in the eastern half of divided Europe. The communists, supported by the Soviet Army, came into absolute power. The leading role in the state was played by the communist Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR), which was to represent the “inhabitants of all towns and villages.” The economy was centrally planned - it was

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² Quotation from A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History*, 2008, p. 237 (Polish edition: *Polska pod rządami komunistów 1944-1989*, Cracow, 2010). The Solidarity phenomenon was researched by numerous Polish historians. The more prominent works include the following: J. Holzer, *Solidarność 1980-1981. Geneza i historia*, Paris 1984; *Solidarność: XX lat historii*, edited by M. Łątkowska, Warsaw 2000; T.G. Ash, *Polska rewolucja. Solidarność*, 1987; J. R. Sielezin, *Plaszczyzna konfrontacji politycznej między „Solidarnością” a władzą w latach 1980-1981*, Wrocław 2005; *Droga do niepodległości : Solidarność 1980-2005*, edited by A. Borowski, Warsaw 2005. Authorities’ preparations for the martial law are presented by A. Paczkowski in *Droga do „mniejszego zła”. Strategia i taktyka obozu władzy. Lipiec 1980-styczeń 1982*, Cracow 2002. The 1st National Conference of Delegates was described by B. Kaliski, in *“Antysocjalistyczne zbiorowisko”? : I Krajowy Zjazd Delegatów NSZZ Solidarność*, Warsaw 2003. A monumental, 7-volume work by Ł. Kamiński and G. Waligóra was published in 2010 by the Institute for National Remembrance (IPN).

the state's decision what to produce and in what quantities, what the wages would be, and what prices would be charged in the shops.

Poles undertook numerous attempts to defy communist rule, demanding “bread and freedom.” The working class protested in great numbers in Poznań in 1956 and in the Gdańsk region in 1970. The authorities ordered the army and police forces to fire on the protesters. Students and workers took to the streets in numerous Polish cities in 1968, where they were forcibly dispersed and victimized. In 1976, a severe increase in food prices sparked workers' protests in the cities of Ursus, Płock, and Radom. They were met by repression as well.

By the mid-1970s, the democratic opposition began to form their first organizations. After subduing the protests in Radom, Płock, and Ursus, the authorities imprisoned a great number of activists. Opposition leaders, with Jacek Kuroń among them, established the Workers' Defense Committee (Komitet Obrony Robotników - KOR). Its members defended detained workers at court trials, offered financial support to their families, and published articles on the unlawful conduct of those in power. The path created by KOR was soon followed by others – over a thousand people became involved in the actions of the democratic opposition between 1976 and 1980. In 1978, Gdańsk saw the establishment of the Free Trade Unions, led, inter alia, by Bogdan Borusewicz, Andrzej Gwiazda, Anna Walentynowicz, and Lech Wałęsa.

The elevation of Archbishop of Krakow Karol Wojtyła to the Papacy was an event that greatly impacted the mood of Polish society. In 1979, Wojtyła visited Poland in his official capacity as John Paul II. In his speeches, he reiterated the truths that had been long forgotten: “The state is not only the sovereign of humans. Its task is to help and serve humans.” The streets of the towns visited by the Pope were filled with people. In Warsaw, he was welcomed by a crowd of 300,000.

At the same time, Poland was deeply affected by an economic depression. It is sufficient to mention that between 1975 and 1980 Poland's debt to Western countries increased from 7.4 billion to over 21 billion US dollars. Poles were forced to endure even longer lines forming outside commercial establishments selling the most basic of foodstuffs, such as sugar or meat. The authorities, however, decided to go even further. On July 1, 1980, they raised the price of meat. Strikes broke out throughout the country, the most important of which commenced on August 14, 1980, in Gdańsk. The protesters demanded that Free Trade Unions activist Anna Walentynowicz be reinstated to her former job. They also called for an increase in wages and benefits, and demanded that a monument be erected to commemorate the shipyard workers – victims of December 1970. By early evening, over 12,000 workers were on strike. They were led by the Free Trade Unions and Lech Wałęsa, who was soon elected chairman of the Strike Committee.

In order to coordinate the efforts of the workers protesting throughout Gdańsk, on the night of August 17 an Interfactory Strike Committee (Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy - MKS) was established. A workforce of over 150 plants joined the organization the following day. MKS activists drew up 21 demands. The piece of paper on which they were written has become one of the most important documents in the history of the twentieth century and has been added to UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List. The protesters demanded the right to establish trade union organizations that would be independent from the authorities, the right to strike, freedom of speech and publication, as well as the release of prisoners of conscience. They also raised social issues, such as higher wages, market supplies, a lower retirement age, and a higher quality of healthcare services.

The authorities were forced to concede and come to an agreement with the striking workforce. The first such agreement was signed in Szczecin on August 30. One day later, on August 31, 1980, another agreement was signed in Gdańsk between Lech Wałęsa and Deputy Prime Minister Mieczysław Jagielski. Lech Wałęsa noted: “We have achieved everything that was achievable under the circumstances. We will achieve the rest as well, for we have what’s most important: our independent, self-governing trade unions. This is our guarantee for the future.” The August Agreements (the customary name in use, despite the fact that the third agreement was signed on September 3 in Jastrzębie) constituted a social contract that was unique within the entire communist bloc.

The MKS was then transformed into the Interfactory Founding Committee (Międzyzakładowy Komitet Założycielski – MKZ). Similar structures were organized throughout the country. The trade union movement was growing at a formidable pace – over a dozen regional organizations had formed by mid-September. The first national meeting of all of their representatives was held on September 17, 1980, in Gdańsk. It was there that the decision was made to create one, nationwide organization called Solidarity. The union was headed by the National Coordinating Committee (Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza - KKP), which in turn, was chaired by Lech Wałęsa. This was yet another in a series of exceptional decisions – it was previously unheard of for trade unions to be organized based on a regional and not sectoral approach. This decision, however, was deeply justified: the establishment of a single union allowed it to operate in a uniform manner. The authorities were incapable of making separate arrangements with “large” industrial sectors, while at the same time ignoring those of lesser importance. Trade union activists from smaller towns could not be repressed, as larger centers could go on strike in their defense.

Social movement

By the beginning of October 1980, new trade union organizations had been established in 4,500 plants and factories, with their membership reaching 2.5 million.³ Their activity was most apparent in larger conglomerations, where MKZ organizations joined smaller unions from individual plants. In larger centers, between 50 and 80 percent of the workforce joined NSZZ Solidarity. The situation was somewhat different in smaller factories, where only 20 to 50 percent of the employees decided to become trade union members. The Solidarity movement was driven, at that time, by four major centers: Gdańsk, Katowice, Wrocław and the Mazowsze region. These areas are where agendas and assumptions were first formed, which were then implemented in other cities as well.⁴

By the end of November 1980, the estimated number of Solidarity members was 5.5 million.⁵ This meant that, on average, over 60,000 people had joined the union daily since the August Agreements were first signed. To show the scale of the phenomenon, one may say that Solidarity was joined, every day, by the entire population of a medium-sized city. By the end of December, the union had 6.9 million members,⁶ with their numbers growing even further to 7.7 million in March 1981.⁷ The most accurate figure was calculated during preparations for the First National Conference of Delegates, which began in September 1981. At that time, Solidarity had over 8.9 million members.

³ Central Archives of Modern Records (AAN), KC PZPR, 880/1, Zakres oddziaływania NSZZ związanych z ośrodkiem „Solidarność”, b.p.

⁴ AAN, KC PZPR, niektóre elementy sytuacji w ruchu związkowym, 7 X 1980, b.p.

⁵ AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1316, Wykaz KZ i MKZ oraz szacunkowa liczebność NSZZ „Solidarność” według stanu na 30 XI 1980, pp.50-51.

⁶ Institute for National Remembrance (AIPN), BU 0236/315, vol.1, Charakterystyka głównych ogniw „Solidarności,” pp.184-185

⁷ AIPN, BU 0236/315, vol.1, Wykaz ilościowy KZ i MKZ oraz szacunkowa liczebność NSZZ „Solidarność”. Stan na 20 III 1981, pp. 17-18.

At that time, Poland had slightly more than 35 million inhabitants, 12.5 million of whom were professionally active (excluding those working in the farming sector). Solidarity attracted people regardless of their professional background or party association. Despite the authorities' objections, independent trade unions were established even in institutions once considered a foundation stone of the Communist regime – television, courts, prosecution offices, and even the police and army. The Communist Party had approximately three million members at that time. They typically were the ones who formed the crucial element of the communist system, but instead, one third of them, over 1 million members, joined the ranks of Solidarity.

The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union of Individual Farmers of Solidarity established at that time also formed a part of the social movement. Its main objectives were to reform agricultural policy and to introduce local governments to deal with issues relevant to the rural community.⁸ The Independent Students' Union (Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów – NZS) was formed in the universities, with its members fighting for curriculum reform, freedom of work, and release of prisoners of conscience. It is estimated that at its height, the rural Solidarity movement could have had as many as 800,000 members. According to estimates of the Independent Students' Union, its ranks were 80,000 members strong.⁹ Once all these figures are added, it turns out that 1 in 4 citizens of Poland was a member of some type of a trade union organization. When only adults are considered, one in two Poles was a trade union member.

The phenomenon is difficult to describe in an unequivocal manner due to the scale of the movement, but also due to the specific character of the communist state. Certain difficulties arise in describing the union's ideology, which is seemingly packed with contradiction. Lech Wałęsa

⁸ On rural Solidarity see: T. Kozłowski, "Powstanie NSZZ Rolników Indywidualnych 'Solidarność' 1980-1981," [in:] *Solidarność" Rolników 1980-1989*, edited by A. W. Kaczorowski, Warsaw 2010, pp. 33-110.

⁹ On NZS see: T. Kozłowski, "Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów 1980-1989," [in:] *NSZZ „Solidarność” 1980–1989*, volume 7: Wokół „Solidarności,” edited by Łukasz Kamiński and Grzegorz Waligóra, Warsaw 2010, p. 237-298.

claimed to have the views of a social democrat, and believed that at least one third of society would vote in the same manner as he did.¹⁰ He also added that socialism, as such, was a good system. Such an attitude did not go against his religious beliefs, nor did it prevent him from criticizing communists. Solidarity was a combination of water and fire. Its two most prominent advisors were catholic activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki (who became the first prime minister of free Poland in 1989) and Jacek Kuroń, an opposition activist of socialist beliefs and one of the establishing members of and an important figure in the Workers' Defense Committee. In the introduction to the first version of Solidarity's manifesto, the following principles were identified as the union's primary values: "the best traditions of the nation, ethical standards of Christianity, political call for democracy and a socialist social attitude."¹¹

Solidarity functioned as a typical trade union: it fought for increased wages and improved working conditions. Its actions, however, were more far-reaching. It presented economic (the ranks of its advisors included many renowned economists) and social reform plans (e.g. related to education, the construction industry or ways to combat alcoholism).¹² In addition, Solidarity undertook initiatives that were not typical of a trade union. It appealed for the release of prisoners of conscience, a specialized agenda of the union was established for that purpose. It also fought for freedom of speech. Solidarity activists published numerous newspapers, breaking the state's monopoly on information. The fight for the freedom of speech also included promoting the true history of Poland, falsified by the communist authorities over the years.¹³ In

¹⁰ *Paris Match*, 28 XI 1980.

¹¹ Krzysztof Brzechczyn, "Program i myśl polityczna NSZZ 'Solidarność'," [in:] *NSZZ „Solidarność” 1980–1989*, volume 2: Ruch społeczny, p. 26.

¹² The activists themselves (based on a survey commissioned by the union in 1981) considered Solidarity to be a trade union (47.7%). Such answers as "social union" and "organization of Polish citizens" were indicated by 19% of those surveyed (Jan Skórzyński, "Powstanie czy rewolucja," [in:] *Droga do niepodległości. Solidarność 1980-2005*, p. 39).

¹³ Marcin Meller, "Rola myślenia o historii w ruchu Solidarność w latach 1980-1981," [in:] *Solidarność w ruchu 1980-1981*. Studies, edited by Marcin Kula, Warsaw 2000, pp. 219-266.

1981, the authorities of Solidarity planned for union representatives to participate in the local government elections.

Solidarity also played an important political role in the entire Eastern bloc. During the First National Conference of Delegates, the “Message to the Working People of Eastern Europe” was issued, calling upon workers from other Eastern European countries to stand up for their rights. The call was effective, to a certain degree. The KGB observed that the situation in Poland caused protests in the Baltic States, Ukraine, and Belarus to increase.¹⁴

Solidarity was a completely unique phenomenon that defies clear interpretation. Many have attempted to describe the union by applying various labels. It has been called, for example, a revolution¹⁵ and a nation-liberating movement.¹⁶ Revolution does not seem to be an adequate term here. First, Solidarity members never considered their actions to be of a revolutionary character. The workers themselves were not in favor of this type of nomenclature as well, as they associated it more with communism in its worst, Soviet incarnation. The intention was also not to tease the Soviets by using the term “revolution.” Even without it, the Soviet authorities referred to the events taking place in Poland as “a raging counterrevolution.”¹⁷

One of the crucial arguments against this theory was that revolutionaries, by definition, rely on violence. Solidarity, meanwhile, was a non-violent movement. Even when tanks were brought to the streets of Polish towns when martial law was imposed, society decided to offer no armed resistance. However, even peaceful transformations have recently begun to be referred to

¹⁴ Vladislav M. Zubok, “Soviet foreign policy from détente to Gorbachev, 1975–1985,” [in:] *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 3, p. 105

¹⁵ The theory of revolution was analyzed, inter alia, by Martin Malia, *Sowiecka tragedia*, Warsaw 1998, p. 433; Timothy Garton Ash, *Polska rewolucja. Solidarność 1980-1981*, Warsaw/London, 1987; Arista Maria Cirtautas, *The Polish Solidarity Movement. Revolution, democracy and natural rights*, London-New York 1997; Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Samoograniczająca się rewolucja*.

¹⁶ Antoni Dudek, “Rewolucja robotnicza i ruch narodowowyzwoleńczy,” [in:] *Lekcja sierpnia. Dziedzictwo „Solidarności” po dwudziestu latach*, edited by Dariusz Gawin, Warsaw 2002. An overall summary was attempted by Jan Skórzyński, “Powstanie czy rewolucja,” [in:] *Droga do niepodległości. Solidarność 1980-2005*, pp. 39-50.

¹⁷ Timothy Garton Ash, *Polska rewolucja. Solidarność 1980-1981*, Warsaw/London, 1987, pp. 179-180.

as revolutions. These, however, are the so-called color revolutions, exemplified by the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003), the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004), or the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan (2005). The events that took place during the 1989 Autumn of the Nations in Eastern Europe were referred to as a revolution as well.

The name of the 1980-1981 revolution is undermined by the fact that Solidarity never postulated or planned to take power in the country. Its leaders clearly stated that their intention was to control and criticize the authorities, but not to take over their duties.

Such a fear of confrontation was also a factor that hindered the potential outbreak of a “national uprising.” National emphasis was, for obvious reasons, present within the Solidarity movement as well. Much attention was given to the holidays of May 3 and November 11. The communists did not celebrate those traditional holidays and banned them soon after World War II. The people, however, continued to show great affection for those solemn anniversaries. In 1981, the anniversary of the ratification of Poland’s constitution, celebrated on May 3, was celebrated with a great, national feast. The celebrations were attended by 20,000 people in Szczecin, 30,000 in Gdańsk, 32,000 in Bydgoszcz, and 10,000 in Łódź. The celebrations at Jasna Góra were attended by approximately 180,000 people (compared to only 12,000 in attendance the year before). Public events held on November 11, 1980, saw crowds of approximately 40,000 people, 10 times more than the year before. Even more people were involved in the celebrations the following year, when as many as 30,000 people were in attendance in Warsaw alone.

But were these patriotic gatherings involving the society more than the fight for social and trade union freedom? One may compare the celebrations of national holidays with the scale of the protests. A one-hour strike against the repression of trade union activists and delays in pay raises was held on October 3, 1980. The strike involved 1,800 institutions and 1.3 million

workers. During the conflict over free Saturdays, over 2.9 million people refused to work on January 10, 1981.¹⁸

Particular significance was attached to the history and memory of social upheavals in 1956, 1970, and 1976, which were symbolized by a special monument erected in Gdańsk. It seems, however, that the “nationalistic” trends were hampered by the threat posed by the Russian “bear.” The number of protests and publications that directly opposed the Soviets was not an adequate representation of the social mood that prevailed. The Soviets and the geopolitical situation acted as an umbrella protecting those in power in the People’s Republic of Poland. As Adam Michnik put it: “an attempt to overturn the rule of the Workers’ Party in Poland is equivalent to an assassination of the ideological and national existence of the USSR. We should strive not to overthrow the communists, but to reform the principles they follow (...) the communist government must take the aspirations articulated by the society into consideration.”¹⁹

Solidarity also saw additional original concepts describing its character. The origins of Solidarity were traced back not to the 1980s, and not even to the twentieth century, but to the Republic of the eighteenth century. It was then, in the monarchy, that the nobility successfully crusaded for the “Nihil Novi nisi commune consensu” principle, i.e. a right stating that “nothing can be decided about us without us.” The nobility could declare disobedience to a king who did not serve the country well, in the opinion of the nobility, and could force him to adopt a program to repair the state. The law offered the nobility the following privileges: freedom of individuals, freedom of speech, and freedom of belief. Some referred to Solidarity as the twentieth century incarnation of the poor nobility. Having observed the National Conference of Delegates,

¹⁸ J. R. Sielezin, *Plaszczyzna konfrontacji politycznej między „Solidarnością” a władzą w latach 1980-1981*, p. 220; AINR, BU 185/6, Informacja dotycząca przebiegu 62 rocznicy odzyskania niepodległości, p. 36; AINR, BU 185/16, Informacja sytuacyjna nr 108 za okres 3-4 V 1981, p. 31-32; AINR, BU 1091/236, vol. 9, Uroczystości z okazji 63 rocznicy odzyskania niepodległości, pp. 103-108.

¹⁹ AINR, BU 01225/2509, Adam Michnik invigilation report, N/A, p. 520.

Timothy Garton Ash compared it to do a local meeting of the nobility. Although from the historical point of view, the expansion of the range of privileges the nobility enjoyed finally led to the weakening of the state, it also contributed to the creation of one of the most beautiful symbols of Polish freedom. In 1791, the Sejm passed Europe's first constitution. It was the second document of this type in the world – the first one was adopted in the United States in 1787.²⁰ Such a comparison proves that the exceptional character and role that Solidarity played in the history of Poland has received the recognition it deserves.

Solidarity is best described using the social movement concept. The trade union organization as such was rooted in the phenomenon observed in September 1980.²¹ It is usually the case that a trade union commences its operations and then gradually expands its member base thanks to the support it offers. In the case of Solidarity, the masses joined the union first, with its structure organized at a later stage. Initially, membership was not associated with any benefits; quite the opposite, the authorities warned that those who joined the union would lose a considerable portion of their social rights guaranteed by their employer. Union activists were victimized and spied on.

Spontaneity, a typical feature of social movements, also played an important role in the case of Solidarity, which is best proven by the fact that the organization lacked a specific action plan during the first months of its existence. Its financing was also initially based on provisional solutions, as no efficient system could be organized for collecting and distributing membership fees. Such creative chaos was, to a certain extent, a trademark feature of the organization, as one

²⁰ Solidarity was described as Poland's last confederation by Jerzy Stępień in "Pierwsza Solidarność a tradycja polskich konfederacji," *Przegląd Powszechny*, issue 2, 2007; Solidarity and its traditions dating back to several centuries ago was the subject of a work by Martin Malia, "Poland's Eternal Return," *The New York Review of Books*, September 29, 1983; Comparison with a local nobility government - Timothy Garton Ash, *Polska rewolucja. Solidarność 1980-1981*, Warsaw/London, 1987, p. 143.

²¹ *Solidarność w ruchu 1980-1981. Studia*, edited by Marcin Kula, Warsaw 2000, pp. 8-9.

of its resolutions read as follows: “The multitude of attitudes, views and concepts will be, through its diversity, a condition determining the Union’s continuity and creative power. Let unity be based on diversity, for it will be persistent and accepted then. Solidarity should not be identified with any specific concepts or views in the phase in which these are created and promoted, but should rather support all initiatives originating from the people.”²²

The complex character of the problem has been probably best defined by Alain Touraine, who conducted his research on Solidarity in Poland in 1981: “our conclusion – not as obvious as one could expect – is that the situation in Poland called for a ‘total social movement’, i.e. the combination of trade union activity, a fight for free trade unions, a democracy-promoting movement and a national uprising.”²³

Conclusion

The activity of Solidarity was interrupted by the authorities who introduced martial law on the night of December 12-13, 1981, a move that was illegal even from the point of view of legal regulations then in effect. Power was assumed by the Military Council of National Salvation (Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego – WRON), but de facto it was General Wojciech Jaruzelski who held absolute power, as he headed both the communist party and the government.

Tanks and armed personnel carriers took to the streets, which were patrolled by the military. Solidarity activists and members of the democratic opposition were detained – nearly 10,000 people were imprisoned during martial law, Lech Wałęsa included. Most of them were Solidarity members: 7,844 people (including 78 members of the National Committee and 808

²² Fragment of a declaration by the MKZ in Katowice. *Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza NSZZ „Solidarność”. Posiedzenie w dniach 31 III- 1 IV 1981, Warsaw 1987*, p. 104., from: Kula, *Solidarność w ruchu 1980-1981. Studia*, edited by Marcin Kula, Warsaw 2000, p. 8-9.

²³ A. Touraine [et al.], *Solidarność : analiza ruchu społecznego 1980-1981*, Warsaw 1989, p. 9.

members of regional union authorities); 410 members of the NZS, and 333 members of the farmers' Solidarity were detained as well. In total, 1,008 women and 8,728 men were detained.

The *junta* soon took to removing people from state administration and from individual workplaces who displayed an attitude too critical of the communist system. In the education sector, the purge involved 1,249 people. More than one thousand journalists lost their jobs. A total of 1,329 people were demoted at institutions of higher education, including several dozen chancellors, deans, and institute directors. Simultaneously, a large portion of plants and factories were militarized. Such a solution allowed the authorities to lay off staff and punish them pursuant to stricter, military regulations. During martial law, magistrate courts punished 207,692 persons for misdemeanors against the "Martial law decree."

In 1982, meat, butter, sugar, cereals, sweets, washing powder, shoes, wedding rings, cigarettes, and vodka were available only by special vouchers. Long lines formed in front of shops offering other foodstuffs.

The negative consequences of martial law were experienced not only by Solidarity, but by the entire Polish society. Those most active, who formed the backbone of the social capital of the People's Republic of Poland prior to the introduction of the martial law, were detained, arrested, bullied, and had their professional careers abruptly ended.

In March 1982, General Jaruzelski introduced a plan under which some union activists and opposition members were forced to emigrate. He was inspired by the actions of Fidel Castro, who allowed citizens of Cuba to leave the island in 1980. Over the five months that followed, more than 125,000 refugees left for the USA. Jaruzelski was fascinated by such a solution. In his conversations with Soviet comrades he noted: "If several thousand leave [Poland], just like Fidel

allowed, our situation would be much easier.”²⁴ Those under detention were encouraged to leave first. They were promised a release in exchange for a promise to leave the country. Most were bullied. Nearly 2,000 detainees and over 3,500 of their family members, along with 540 people who had conducted “hostile political activity” and nearly 776 of their family members applied for a permit to leave the country by November 1983. By the end of November, 770 detainees and 1,442 members of their families, and 158 “political enemies” and 277 of their family members had left the country. The majority left for the US (237), West Germany (158) and France (154).²⁵ Although the scale of the campaign was not as vast as initially planned by the *junta*, this wave of emigration definitely was a massive blow for Poland.

The events of 1980 and 1981 irreversibly changed the level of awareness among the Polish people. Solidarity remained active throughout the 1980s as an underground, illegal organization. The union remained a symbol of a united Polish society. The Solidarity banner was a meaningful symbol of the peaceful shift in power in 1989. In June 1989, in a partly democratic vote, Poles supported those with a Solidarity background. Soon after, the positions of prime minister and president were assumed by two men who started their path towards a free Poland in the Gdańsk Shipyard in August 1989. Those men were Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Lech Wałęsa.

²⁴ Dariusz Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia? : migracje z Polski 1949-1989*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 315-316.

²⁵ AIPN, BU 825/1, a note on the migration of detainees, 30 XI 1983, p. 19.