



**Patriotyzm Jutra**

zrealizowano ze środków Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego

*Published by:* Department for City Promotion, Gdańsk City Office, 80-803 Gdańsk, Poland

*Written by:* Anna Zbierska

*Translated by:* Piotr Łuba

*Graphic layout:* Sławomir Witkowski – IDEAMEDIA Advertising Agency

*Photographs:* Stanisław Składanowski, Bogusław Nieznalski, Andrzej Gojke, Jerzy Kośnik, Pavel Stecha, Zbigniew Kosycarz/KFP, Maciej Kosycarz/KFP, Wojciech Jakubowski/KFP, Jacek Domiński/Reporter, Chris Niedenthal/FORUM, Janusz Mazur/PAP, PAP/CAF, PAP/DPA.

*Architectural concepts:* materials from the International Seminar on the European Solidarity Centre

*Map of Europe:* The Solidarity Centre Foundation

[www.gdansk.pl](http://www.gdansk.pl)

SOLIDARNOŚĆ

**ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM**  
The European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk



**GDAŃSK**

[www.gdansk.pl](http://www.gdansk.pl)



# The Message of Freedom

The date is 31 August 1980, Gdańsk.

Lech Wałęsa, the leader of what was probably the greatest strike in the history of the communist system, appears at the gate of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk, which has been present in recent days in practically all the news services round the world. “We’ve finally got our own independent workers’ unions!” he cries to the thousands of people assembled there. The crowd goes crazy: they applaud, sing and rejoice. People embrace each other, strangers fall into each other’s arms. Today it might be difficult to comprehend that elation, but it was then that something happened in Gdańsk which shook the foundations of the world and gave rise to a new era not only in European history.

“Although that solidarity strike gave birth to Solidarity, the 10-million-strong, powerful movement for national and civic liberation, we could not begin to imagine its consequences. Looking back, we can see that this Polish revolution was the beginning of the end of communism in Europe, the end of the Cold War and the unnatural division of Europe into East and West, symbolised by the Berlin Wall,” commented British historian Timothy Garton Ash, years later. Gdańsk, the 25th anniversary of the signing of the August Agreements and the rise of Solidarity.

The speaker is Viktor Yushchenko, President of Poland’s neighbour, the Ukraine: “I have always associated the Polish city of Gdańsk with the word freedom. It was from here, from this Shipyard that the vessel with the proud name Solidarity set sail for the tempestuous world. It set sail and 24 years on it brought on its sails help and support to the haven in Kiev – Independence Square, where the fate of the Ukraine was at stake. Then, on a cold December evening, Lech Wałęsa, the leader of the Polish revolution, with his presence and warm words helped the Ukrainians persevere and win. Without this support, without the sweltering Gdańsk of 1980, there would be no cold Kiev 2004.”



# Memory

The date is 31 August 2005. A quarter of a century has passed since the famous strikes and the establishing of Solidarity, the first independent workers' union in the communist bloc, while also a powerful civic movement, which gave birth to the great transformations in Europe and throughout the world. Distinguished political and social personalities gathered in Gdańsk, including the heads of state of over 20 countries, to express their gratitude to and recognition of the participants in those events. One by one they signed the Founding Act to establish the European Solidarity Centre. This is not just an acknowledgement of the past, but also an expression of the conviction of its significance and relevance to the contemporary world. "Europe needs such a Centre to foster the idea of Solidarity," says José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission.

"The extremely important events from before 25 years in Gdańsk announced the beginning of a new era in Europe," commented former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. "The world was looking with hope when Solidarity's brave men and women rose against the system of oppression and forced it to bow down to human perseverance. The historic accord meant an end of totalitarian governments in Poland and started a process which gave freedom to all the people of Central and Eastern Europe. (...) The residents of Gdańsk can be proud that they were the herald of freedom and I am proud that I can call myself an Honorary Citizen of Gdańsk." Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State of the Holy See: "(...) Thanks to this protest and persistent co-operation, in spite of serious obstacles, it became possible to implement the principles of modern democracy. This was a precedent, which gave rise to the wave of change in other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc. The result of these changes is today's Europe in which free nations can unite even stronger for the common good."



SOLIDARNOŚĆ

# For Your Freedom and Ours

14 August 1980. A strike breaks out in the Gdańsk Shipyard. Lech Wałęsa, who was previously sacked for dissident activity, gets into the factory by climbing the now-famous shipyard wall. The outbreak of the strike in the Shipyard leads to a domino effect: a day later other factories, shipyards and ports join the strike; public transportation stops. The protest takes the form of a solidarity strike. An Inter-factory Strike Committee is established with Lech Wałęsa as its head. Twenty-one demands addressed to the authorities are written. The most revolutionary demands concern the establishing of workers' unions which would be independent of the authorities, the abolition of censorship, the recognition of the right to strike, the abolition of repression for political beliefs and the release of political prisoners. All this was anathema in the countries of the Soviet bloc, something unacceptable to those in power. The authorities played for time, tried to divide the movement, to intimidate the strikers. The result, however, was contrary to the authorities' expectations: gradually, the strikes covered the entire Coast, and then the entire country.

August 31 1980. Finally, after many days of struggle and negotiations, Lech Wałęsa can stand on the shipyard gate and announce the strikers' victory. For the first time in history the communist powers give in to the demands of the people.

The signing of the Gdańsk Agreements evoked incredible enthusiasm in Poland and aroused civic activity unseen for decades. During the Gdańsk August, the civic society was reborn. Soon, the Solidarity Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union had 10 million members, which meant that it was supported by almost all the adult citizens of Poland. From the very beginning, Solidarity was not just a trade union but a powerful civic movement with freedom at its core. Its leader, Lech Wałęsa, can be compared with such luminaries of world history as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Mahatma Gandhi.





# Peaceful Revolution

On 13 December 1981, at midnight, martial law was imposed in Poland. Power was taken over by a military junta led by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, leader of the Communist Party. Solidarity was outlawed, together with other independent civic organisations and associations. Strikes, assemblies and manifestations were banned. The factories, mines and shipyards were militarised.

A curfew was implemented, as was a ban on staying away from one's permanent place of residence, phone tapping and the monitoring of letters. Censorship made its triumphant return. The power of courts-martial was broadened, while a strict and immediate punishment procedure was introduced. Thousands of people were sent to jail and to the so-called internment camps. Lech Wałęsa and the other leaders of Solidarity were interned, meaning that they were arrested indefinitely, without a court sentence. The police and the military were deployed onto the city streets. The entire democratic world was outraged at the quelling of the Solidarity freedom movement.

The support it gave was priceless.

5 October 1983. The leader of Solidarity receives the Nobel Peace Prize. "The real laureate of this prize is the entire Polish nation," remarked Lech Wałęsa. "What is happening now in my homeland, fills me with shame. It is a shameful thing that people are thrown into jail and out of work for their membership in the Union for remaining faithful to their ideas. Outlawing Solidarity was a shameful thing. (...) I will never give up the fight for the ideas for which I have always fought. Just as in the past this will be a fight using peaceful means. Neither rewards nor jail can turn me off the road that I have chosen."

A few years later, the communist regimes fell; Poles and the other nations of Central and Eastern Europe became free again. Lech Wałęsa became the President of the reborn Polish state.



# The City of Freedom

It is no coincidence that the phenomenon of Solidarity, the peaceful civic movement which led to the downfall of communism throughout the world, was born in Gdańsk. Liberty has always been the most valued virtue here. This over 1000-year-old coastal city of uncommon beauty has developed its own unique genius loci over the centuries.

In the times when the stakes of bigotry burned in Europe, Gdańsk became a safe haven for people with ideas going against the grain. Located at the crossroads of Europe, Gdańsk was for centuries a cauldron of cultures, ethnic groups, religions and languages, a home for Poles, Germans, Dutch, Scots, French, Jews, English, Swedes. Gdańsk was famous for its tolerance, and its citizens for their love of liberty. “Before nationalist madness swept the nations of Europe and deprived them of understanding, this city was always open to waves of refugees: the Dutch Mennonites, Scots, French Huguenots found refuge here” (Günter Grass).

During its Golden Age, Gdańsk was one of the most important and wealthiest cities in Europe. The source of this power was commerce, and the affluence it produced was conducive to the development of arts and sciences. Today, it is deservedly known as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. This was the place where Gabriel Fahrenheit, Johannes Hevelius, Arthur Schopenhauer and many more lived and worked, whose traces we can find among the winding streets of the Old Town, in the largest Gothic church in the world or on the moraine hills stretching out to the sea.

“I learnt this city slowly, but finally I learnt it. You have to feel the spirit of Gdańsk, keep your eyes wide open, then you understand more,” confessed the contemporary Gdańsker, Lech Wałęsa.



## EUROPE

1980



## EUROPE

2005



# Solidarity, Gdańsk, the World

Pope John Paul II: “It was in this city that Solidarity was born. This was a turning point in the history of our Nation, as well as in the history of Europe. Solidarity opened the gates of freedom in the countries oppressed by the totalitarian system, tore down the Berlin Wall and helped to unite Europe divided into two blocs since the Second World War. We must not let this memory fade away.”

Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt: “Solidarity transformed itself into a symbol of human rights and freedom not only to the shipyard workers and the Poles, but to all those who lived under the yoke of totalitarianism. It was the perseverance of the Poles and their leader Lech Wałęsa that led to the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, and eventually to the abolition of communism in all the countries of the Soviet Union. The historic role of Solidarity is impossible to overestimate. We should honour it and carry its message to all the corners of the world where people still live without the solidarity they need.”

“A quarter of a century ago, here in Gdansk, the first velvet revolution began (...). Other velvet revolutions have followed, from Prague and Berlin in 1989 to Serbia, Georgia and the orange revolution in the Ukraine - but also on other continents, in the Philippines and in South Africa”  
(Timothy Garton Ash).

There are many places on the face of the Earth where human dignity is downtrodden and the life of an individual human being seems meaningless. So long as this is the case, we will need solidarity.



# The European Solidarity Centre

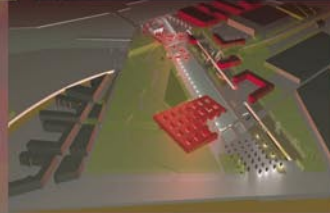
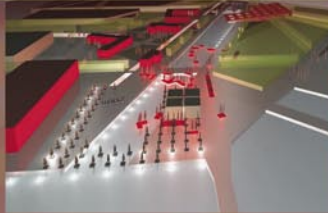
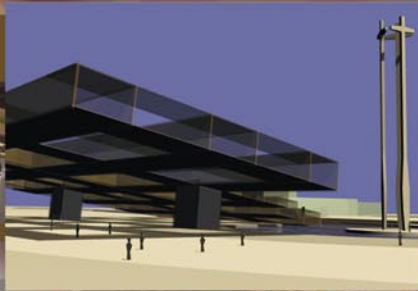
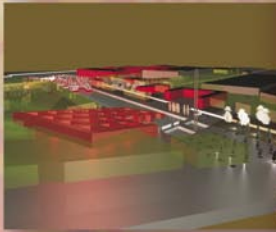
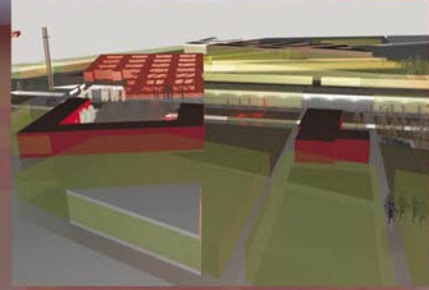
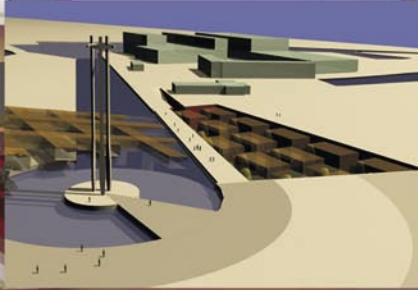
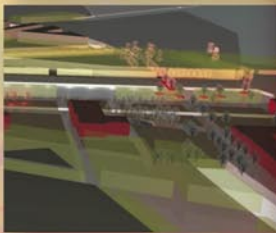
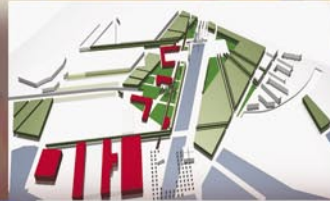
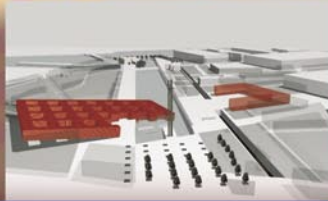
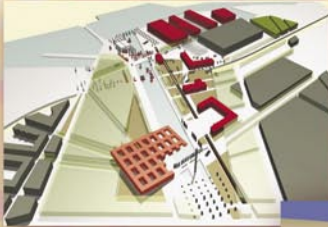
Twenty-five years is a period long enough to verify social and historical phenomena. After a quarter-century, most events blur and fade, leaving only sketchy contours behind. Other events begin to shine, showing their true value. “The events of August 1980 in Poland became a milestone in the post-war History of Europe. The demonstration that the totalitarian regime was not invincible led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, it allowed the Baltic States to regain their independence and brought back freedom to the countries of Central Europe,” said Latvian Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis. Solidarity continues to be an inspiration to people all over the world who fight for freedom, dignity and justice.

“If it had not been for Solidarity,” notes British historian Norman Davies, “Gorbachev would have stood a greater chance of extending the life of the communist system. Of course communism was destined to fall. Without Solidarity, however, it would have lasted longer and ended in a different way.” “What we call The Polish August,” summarises another historian, Timothy Garton Ash, “was the beginning of the end of the short 20th century.” And so Solidarity changed the course of history. However, it also changed something else: it restored hope to all those who had come to doubt in the sense of fighting for a better world.

On the 25th anniversary of August, the European Parliament adopted a resolution to establish August 31 as the Day of Freedom and Solidarity, and the US Congress as Solidarity Day.

Meanwhile, in Gdańsk, on the initiative of Lech Wałęsa, the legendary leader of Solidarity, and the City authorities, an Act of Foundation was signed to establish the European Solidarity





Centre. The signatories included the prime ministers and presidents of the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, the Netherlands, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belgium, Sweden, the Ukraine and Georgia. “Gdańsk not only has the moral right, but also the obligation to establish the European Solidarity Centre for the international community,” said Paweł Adamowicz, Mayor of the City of Gdańsk. “It is here, on the already historic premises of the Gdańsk Shipyard, starting from the famous Gdańsk Crosses: the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers, through the Shipyard gate, which today symbolises the gateway to freedom, and further inside the Shipyard, that we want to show the road to freedom taken by Poland and other nations. It is here that an international research centre on the issues of freedom should stand, so that the voice from Gdańsk, the cradle of Solidarity, can be heard throughout the world. Especially the voice of those who are fighting for their rights today.”

The European Solidarity Centre intends to combine scientific and research functions with a modern museum facility which will document all the aspects of the activity of the democratic opposition in Poland and other former communist countries, to be a venue for important international meetings and discussions. It should serve all those who are still fighting for freedom and human rights.

Gdańsk has allocated a large area (5 ha) in the city centre for the construction of the ESC, from the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers to the docks of the River Martwa Wisła, covering the area and the historic facilities of the Gdańsk Shipyard, where Solidarity was born. On 22 December 2005 an agreement was signed between the Solidarity Centre Foundation, represented by Lech Wałęsa, and the City authorities, which laid out the action plan which is to lead to the completion of the European Solidarity Centre by the year 2010.

The initiators’ determination is supported by the efforts by many groups of people who feel close to the idea behind the establishing of this unique institution. As early as in August 2005, an international seminar took place in Gdańsk, where diverse bold architectural concepts for the Solidarity Centre were presented, so that its architecture would best reflect the message of this unique civic movement .



Support for the construction of the Centre needs to be obtained from various sources: the State, City, and Pomeranian Province budgets, European Union funds, as well as from private donors. Gdańsk, the cradle of Solidarity, appeals to all those who hold dear the ideals of August 1980 to support this historic venture.

You can make your donations to this specially dedicated account:  
The Solidarity Centre Foundation, ul. Wały Piastowskie 24, 80-855 Gdańsk, Poland  
Bank PKO S.A., V Oddział w Gdańsku, ul. Wały Piastowskie 1  
Account No. 42 1240 2920 1111 0010 0951 3889

To learn more, please contact:  
The Solidarity Centre Foundation  
Danuta Kobzdej  
e-mail: [d.kobzdej@fcs.org.pl](mailto:d.kobzdej@fcs.org.pl)  
tel.: +48 58 769 2024  
fax: +48 58 308 4234

For more information about the entire project,  
please contact the Office of the Plenipotentiary  
of the Mayor of the City of Gdańsk  
for the European Solidarity Centre  
Wały Jagiellońskie 1, 80-853 Gdańsk, Poland  
e-mail: [ecs@gdansk.gda.pl](mailto:ecs@gdansk.gda.pl)  
tel.: + 48 58 323 7050  
tel./fax: + 48 58 323 7051