

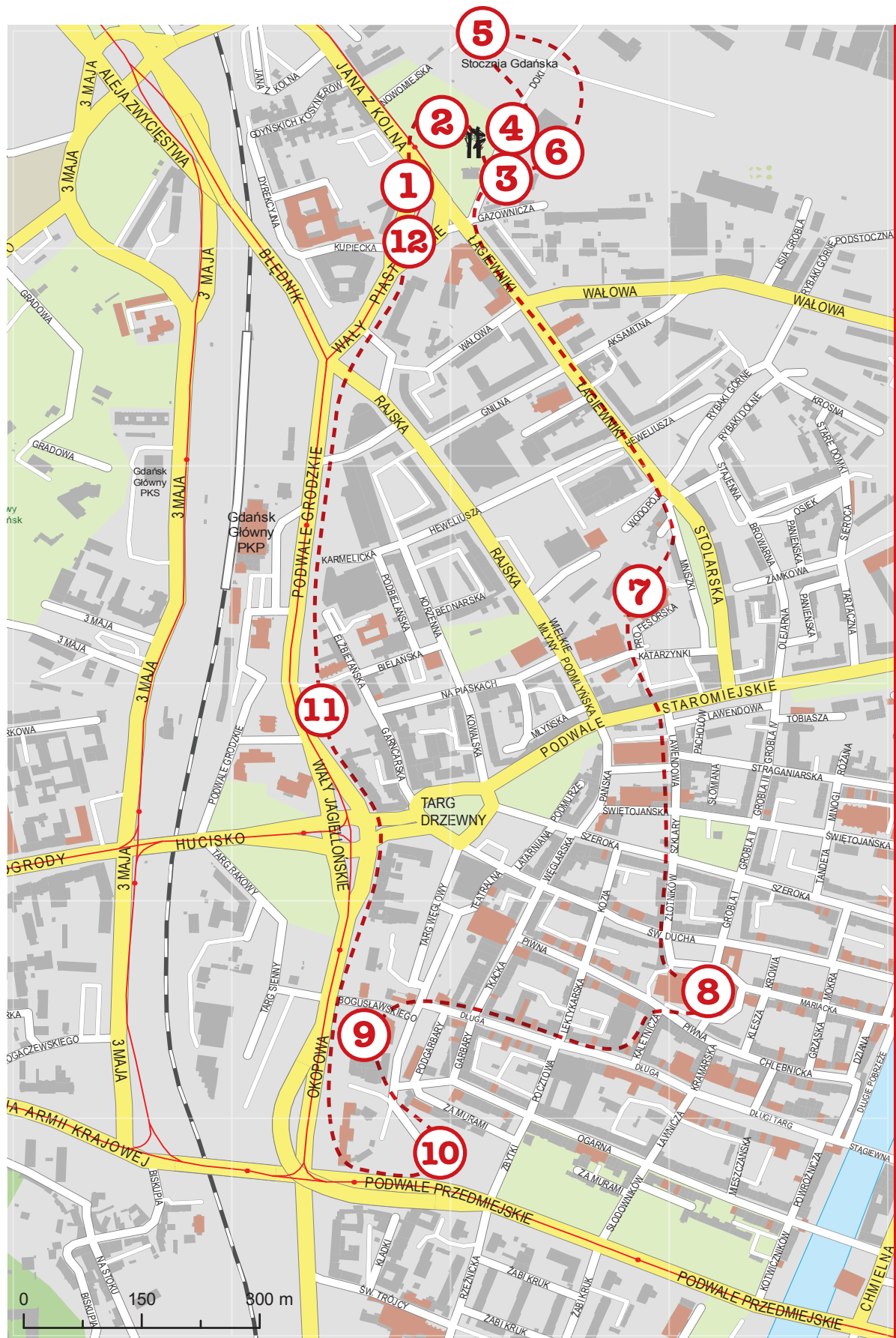
1 GILANUSK

ON THE ROAD
TO FREEDOM



GDAŃSK - ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

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GDAŃSK – ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

A thin worker with prominent whiskers wanted to enter Gdańsk Shipyard. He had no pass – the guards would not let him through the gate. The day was August 14 1980, the shipyard workers began their strike early that morning. The whiskered worker wanted to join them. Back in the street he approached a three-metre-high wall; he climbed in and jumped down onto the Shipyard premises. An hour later, he became the strike leader.

Soon after, representatives of the most important world media descended upon Gdańsk. They described who Lech Wałęsa, the man who jumped over the wall, was. They explained why the Gdańsk Shipyard workers began their strike and what they demanded from the communist authorities. Solidarity was formed – the first trade union independent of the communist regime, a trade union which would eventually number 10 million members. This was the beginning of Poland's road to democracy and the beginning of political change in Europe, which became fully apparent only after almost ten years.

Gdańsk was the most important place of Poland's struggle against communism – starting with the bloody suppression of the workers' protest of December 1970, through the 1980s, to Lech Wałęsa's victory in the presidential elections of 1990. When the communists outlawed Solidarity in 1981, the opposition continued its struggle for freedom. They went underground.

Let's take a tour of the places which were the scenery of those events. We will begin our tour by going underground. Literally. The Roads to Freedom exhibition is held in an old World War II air-raid shelter. The exhibition's creators made sure that the visitors can understand the reason for the Polish people's rebellion against the communist regime. That they understand why life in communist Poland deprived people of their sense of dignity and hope for a better future, and why Gdańskers are so proud of their part in the overthrow of communism, and of the Nobel Peace Prize received by our city's most esteemed citizen – Lech Wałęsa.



Lech Wałęsa, the worker who became the leader of the strike.

The Solidarity logo, one of the best known graphic symbols in the world. (Design: J. Janiszewski)





At the turn of the 1970s and 80s one could only find bread, vinegar, mustard and eggs on the grocery shelves.

The mannequin standing right by the shop counter shows a figure which was a typical sight in communist Poland's streets: a tired woman on the way home, decked with rolls of toilet paper. There were years when even toilet paper was a luxury.

Take a look at the phone booth with the broken telephone: such failures were practically the norm and would remain unrepaired for weeks, while private telephones in homes were a rarity. Many of them were bugged by the secret political police – the Security Service, which also used snoopers and informers.

Communist Poland weighed down on people with its drabness. The lack of lively colours and nice-looking objects, as well as the low quality of products were also a result of the inefficient socialist economy. People longed for normality, they dreamed that Poland be like the Free West. A trip to London or Paris was difficult not only because it was the Secret Police who decided who could be issued a passport and who wouldn't. A Pole among the French, British or Scandinavians was a pauper, because the money he or she would earn here was practically worthless. The media was under strict censorship. Those who rebelled were threatened, beaten and locked up in jail. The Roads to Freedom exhibition is an attractive multimedia presentation of the steps in the struggle for civic rights: the tragedy of December 1970, the strike of August 1980 and the so-called carnival of Solidarity, as well as the imposition of Martial Law in December 1981. It also presents the circumstances of how Lech Wałęsa, Solidarity's imprisoned leader, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983. The fiasco of communist terror in Poland. The first, partially free parliamentary elections of June 1989. And finally: the revolutionary wave that swept through the people of Central and Eastern Europe, returning their freedom and leading to the collapse of the Soviet empire.



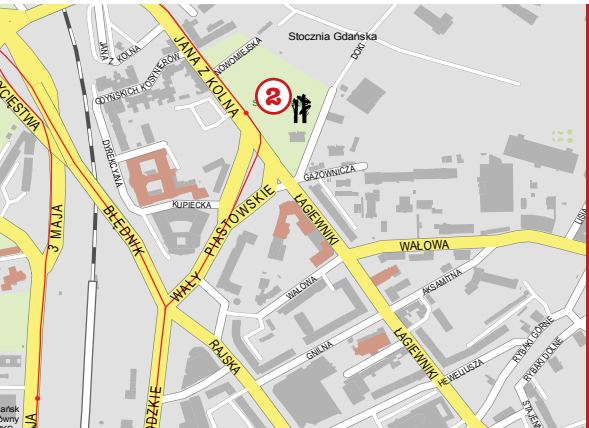
Toilet paper was a scarce product in communist Poland.



The Nobel Peace Prize given to Lech Wałęsa in 1983. In the photograph: Danuta Wałęsa at the Nobel ceremony in Oslo.

2

THE MONUMENT TO THE FALLEN SHIPYARD WORKERS



The Roads to Freedom exhibition is less than 300 metres away from the places which focused the world's attention in 1970 and 1980.

On December 14, 1970 the Gdańsk Shipyard workers found out about the government's raising of the prices of meat and other products. Thousands of workers left the Shipyard in protest and marched down the city streets to the Regional Communist Party Headquarters. The shipyard workers were joined by groups of students passers-by. Riots broke out. The Gdańsk protest spread into other cities on the Polish Coast: Gdynia, Szczecin and Elbląg. The Communists sent 550 tanks, 700 armoured personnel carriers, 5000 police and 27,000 troops against the protesters. The Gdańsk Shipyard was surrounded by army troops. When the workers tried to leave the Shipyard to go to the city, they were shot with live ammunition. At least four demonstrators were killed; there were almost 100 wounded.

"The tanks literally stood at our windows," recalls teacher Halina Pusz, who lived in an apartment block that stands by the Shipyard. "When the army opened fire, our mother told us to hide in the bathroom. I was a little girl then, I remember the fear."

Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers
Solidarity Square

Today, delegations visiting Gdańsk lay floral wreaths at the foot of the Monument; most tourists visiting the city also come here. This is also a place which is dear to many Gdańskers, not only those who were directly involved in the events of the 1970s and 80s.



On December 14, 1970 the authorities sent 550 tanks, 700 armoured personnel carriers, 5000 police officers and 27,000 troops against the protesters.

The army and police also brutally crushed the protests in Gdynia, Szczecin and Elbląg. The toll of the tragedy: 40 dead, almost 1200 wounded, 3,000 people were imprisoned. The authorities hid the death toll and news of the repressions. In many cases, the murdered were secretly buried at night.

When a strike broke out again at the Gdańsk Shipyard in 1980 the communists did not dare to use force. They only did it sixteen months later, when they imposed Martial Law in the entire country.

The shipyard workers managed to commemorate their colleagues who fell in December 1970. They built a mighty monument in the Square on a circular plan, consisting of three crosses linked by their arms: 42 m high and weighing a total of 126 tonnes. Each cross has an anchor: the symbol of faith and hope, also associated with shipbuilding. The lower part of the monument is decorated with reliefs, depicting allegories of the shipbuilders' work, national solidarity and the people's struggle against the regime. They are accompanied by the following words of the Psalm: "The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace" and a fragment of a poem by Czesław Miłosz.



A quarter of a million people came to see the Monument's unveiling on December 16, 1980. The communists did not dare to tear down the Monument when they imposed Martial Law, even when the square by the Shipyard became a place of illegal demonstrations and clashes with the police. The Secret Police would check the IDs and photograph the people who laid flowers at the Monument. Police cordons armed with shields and clubs blocked access to the Monument.



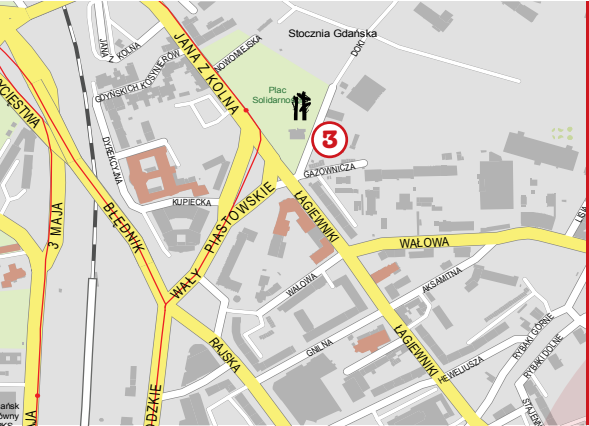
A poster commemorating the unveiling of the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers in Gdańsk.

...You who have harmed
a simple man,
Laughing at his wrongs [...]
Do not feel safe.
The poet remembers.
You can kill one,
but another is born
The words are
written down,
the deed, the date

Czesław Miłosz



3

SHIPYARD
GATE NO. 2

The Gate stands right next to the square with the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers.

It was through this gate that in December 1970 the crowd of workers entered when the military opened fire.

Shipyard Gate No. 2

Solidarity Square

Gate No. 2 is an important element in the history of Gdańsk and Europe. It bears the title of a European Heritage Label. Places honoured in such a way are distinguished for their special importance for the history of Europe and its cultural heritage.

In August 1980, the striking shipyard workers used Gate No. 2 as a shield against any attack by the army and the police. They decided against street demonstrations, so that the tragedy of December 1970 would not repeat itself. The Shipyard gate was padlocked and guarded by the workers. The only people allowed in were the delegations of factories that had joined the strike. Another person who passed through the Gate was the negotiator who signed an agreement with the strikers on behalf of the government on August 31, 1980.

Gate No. 2 was decorated with portraits of Pope John Paul II, white-and-red Polish national flags and flowers. Crowds would gather in front of it. Someone attached a slip of paper with a quote from *The Giaour* by Byron, which made a big impression on the shipyard workers: *For Freedom's battle once begun, / Bequeath'd by bleeding Sire to Son, / Though baffled oft is ever won.* The support given to the strikers by the people of Gdańsk was also practical – they brought food, detergents and money. They would pass them to the workers from hand to hand, between the steel bars of the gate.



On October 16, 2003, the wooden boards with the 21 demands, were entered into UNESCO's Memory of the World Heritage List.

An integral part of Gate No. 2 is the adjacent industrial guard building. It was from there that on August 18, 1980 the strikers hung out two large wooden boards with 21 demands made to the communist government written on them.

The first and most important demand was the acceptance of free trade unions independent of the ruling Communist Party. The second: a guarantee of the right to strike. Other demands included the releasing of political prisoners, improvement of living and working conditions and the enforcement of the previously "dead" provision of the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic concerning freedom of speech, press and publication. When the young opposition activists – Aram Rybicki and Maciej Grzywaczewski wrote the 21 demands down on the boards, Edward Gierek, the 1st Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party thundered over the radio, "No free trade unions! There will be no hesitation on this issue!"

"It was Aram who came up with the idea of the boards," recalls Grzywaczewski. "He understood that announcements and pamphlets are not enough. That we needed some kind of icon, a symbol of the events. And so we made the boards; they came out great."

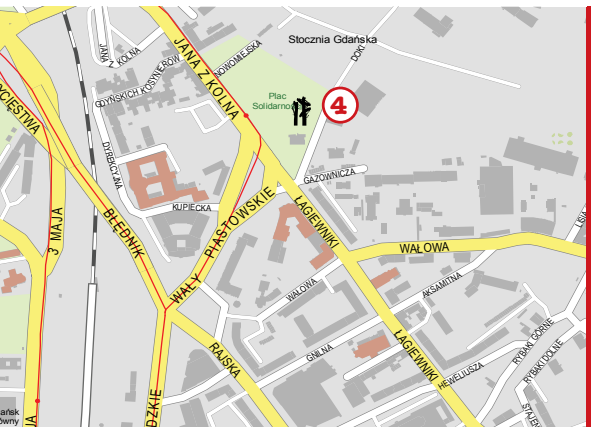


Gdańsk Shipyard,
August 31, 1980.



4

THROUGH THE SHIPYARD



If you go through Gate No. 2, you can take the Subjective Bus Line. Take your camera. An old red Jelcz bus from a quarter-century ago will take you to the places connected with the strike of August 1980 and Lech Wałęsa.

The bus rides down the Shipyard streets. It passes the former Shipyard Management Building, in front of which the crowd of protesting workers stood in August 1980. They were led by Lech Wałęsa, who had been previously fired for his activity against the communist government.

You can also see the preserved industrial architecture of 100 years ago. The Shipyard was built at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Among the vessels built here were warships which served in both World Wars.

The bus line is “subjective,” in that the guides, are former Shipyard workers, who took part in the Gdańsk August – with microphone in hand, dressed in workers’ clothing and a hardhat on their heads.

The Subjective Bus Line

Organiser:

Wyspa Institute of Art
www.wyspa.art.pl

Departure times:

May 1 to September 12 2010
Tuesdays-Sundays 11:00, 14:00

Tickets:

Regular: PLN 10
Discount: PLN 5

Starting point:

Bus stop at Gate No. 2

Booking:

tel. +48 58 573 13 43
(9:00-16:00).

Regular bus stops:

Wałęsa’s shop, Gate No. 1,
Gates on the Road to Freedom,
Former BHP Hall,
Shipyard buildings,
Place where Lech Wałęsa
jumped over the Shipyard wall,
Exhibition at Wyspa Institute of Art,
Slipways.



The bus’s engine wheezes ominously and can break down at any time – just like it used to be in Communist Poland.

First stop: The BHP Hall, where the Interfactory Strike Committee had its sessions in August 1980 and where the agreement between the strikers and the government was signed.

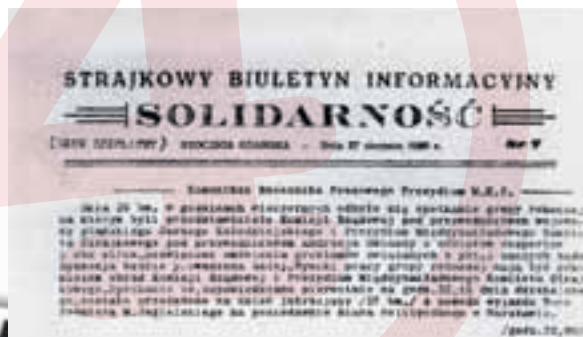
The Subjective Bus Line's next stop is at one of the Shipyard halls. There is a bi-lingual sign on the wall which reads: "Lech Wałęsa's shop." Gdańsk artists have tidied up and restored the workplace of the leader of Solidarity. Today, it is a tourist attraction.

No one should leave the Shipyard without seeing the place, where Wałęsa's historical road began. The bus drives up to the red-brick Shipyard wall. It was here that Lech Wałęsa, a young Shipyard electrician who had been fired from work, jumped over the wall to lead the strike. "I was there when Wałęsa told the director, «Do you still remember me? We want to talk with you»,” recalls guide Paweł Zinzuk, who worked in the Shipyard for 32 years.

Zinzuk was here when the Communists imposed Martial Law in December 1981 and tanks rode into the Shipyard. He describes the course of events. He recalls the students, who came to support the protesters, dragged out of the BHP Hall by the police. "They were beaten; they had blood stains on their shirts."



The opening of Lech Wałęsa's shop in Gdańsk Shipyard.



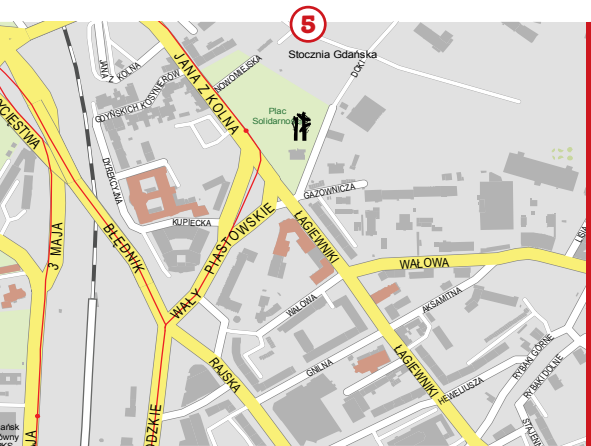
The Solidarity Strike News Bulletin – the strikers' main source of information.



August 31, 1980. The signing of the agreement between the strikers and the government.



ART ON THE “ISLAND”



The Subjective Bus returns to Gate No. 2. Before the last stop it stops by the Wyspa Institute of Art. This is Poland's first non-commercial and non-governmental cultural institution to present contemporary art.

Wyspa Institute of Art
www.wyspa.art.pl
 1 Doki St.
 tel. +48 58 320 44 46

Opening hours:
 Tuesdays - Sundays 12:00 - 18:00



Wyspa (Island in Polish) is among the most dynamic cultural institutions in the country. The Shipyard is a venue for many artistic initiatives. The shop floors hold theatre productions, concerts and exhibitions.

Thanks to Wyspa's international contacts, it exhibits the work of young artists from throughout the world, who express their feelings about society, politics, civilisation and personal matters through sculpture, painting and artistic installations.



A performance accompanying the *Repair Department Exhibition* at the *Modelarnia* (Model-Making Shop) which, in keeping with the Wyspa Institute's tradition, is a place friendly to unconventional artistic endeavours.

Wyspa is among the most dynamic cultural institutions in the country.



They way back to the city leads through Solidarity Square. Before we reach the Square, we will walk under two impressive steel structures.

“These are installations with the joint title of *The Gates*,” explains their creator, Gdańsk artist Grzegorz Kłaman. “The first is shaped like a tilted ship’s bow. It is built from corroded damaged steel. Inside, I placed enormous empty shelves reminiscent of an abandoned archive. Electronic projectors display slogans on the walls. On one side are the slogans of communist ideologues, with the ideas of independent opposition thinkers on the other.”

Both installations are linked by a steel and cobble ramp. The form of the other structure refers to the never built monument to the 3rd Communist International, designed in the early 1920s by Soviet constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin. The inside of the structure is filled with a shaft of light. “I have deconstructed Tatlin’s design,” explains Kłaman. “He tried to express the loftiness of the idea of communism. I showed its disintegration.”



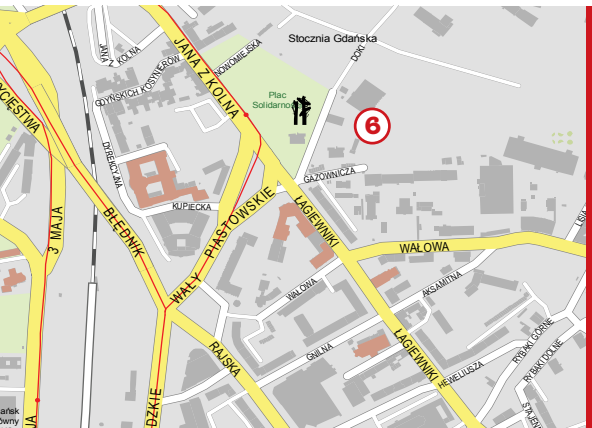
The Gate – an installation by Grzegorz Kłaman.

Jean-Michel Jarre’s Space of Freedom concert in Gdańsk Shipyard, August 2005.





THE BHP HALL - THE BEGINNING OF A NEW POLAND



Before we leave the Gdańsk Shipyard take some time to visit the famous, although unassuming, BHP Hall building (BHP is short for *Bezpieczeństwo i Higiena Pracy - Industrial Health and Safety*), which usually served as the training centre for Shipyard personnel.



It was here that in August 1980, the workers created what could be called a 'strikers' council': The Inter-Factory Strike Committee. Seven hundred factories joined the strike in Pomerania alone, some 180,000 people in total. Delegates – not only from Pomerania, but from all over Poland came to Gdańsk to the BHP Hall, which was the strikers' unofficial national command centre. There they would debate and make joint decisions by voting. They placed a large statue of Lenin, the leader of the Communist Revolution in Russia, sideways to the strikers' sessions. The discussions at the BHP Hall were to be open and democratic so they were broadcast through the Shipyard radio broadcasting system so that the crowds of Gdańskers and visitors gathered at the Shipyard gate could listen in.

The BHP Hall

1 Doki St., at the Gdańsk Shipyard

Tours:

salabhp@solidarnosc.org.pl

August 31, 1980. Deputy Prime Minister Mieczysław Jagielski, as the head of the government delegation and Lech Wałęsa, as the head of the Inter-Factory Strike Committee signed the agreement ending the strike in the Gdańsk Shipyard BHP Hall. The Communist Party yielded and agreed to something unprecedented in the Soviet Bloc: trade unions independent of the authorities.



Poster: Solidarity as one of the symbols of the opposition in the Polish Peoples' Republic (designer: C. Bielecki).



Lenin's statue was turned sideways to the room where the negotiations with the strikers took place.

Where did the strikers sleep during the events? The strike leaders and their advisors slept in the BHP Hall on armchairs, chairs and tables. Others slept in the factory halls. They used styrofoam sheets – an insulation material used in shipbuilding – as mattresses.

It was in the BHP Hall that the strike leaders signed the agreement with the communist government's delegation on August 31, 1980.

The events from the Gdańsk Shipyard were reported by journalists from the world over.

Among them was Ryszard Kapuściński who wrote:
After you crossed the gate, you would go to the BHP building where the accreditation office was. There were two girls sitting there. They were nice but already very tired and confused. They could give you your accreditation or not. Journalists known for their servility towards the communist regime were usually turned down.

Kapuściński wrote further:
I don't know if we are all aware that, regardless of what may happen, from the summer of 1980 we are living in another Poland... Anyone who tries to reduce the movement on the Coast to wages and living conditions understands nothing. The principal motive behind these protests was human dignity...



Lech Wałęsa's victory sign.



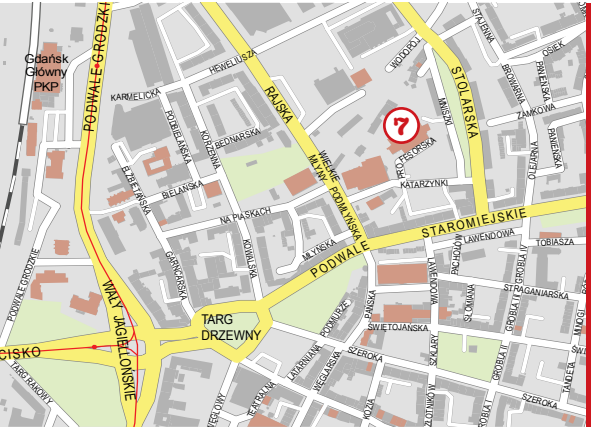
An underground unofficial Solidarity postage stamp: a symbol of resistance. When Martial Law was imposed, the United States supported Poland's struggle for freedom.

The masthead of Solidarity Weekly: the trade union's official newspaper. Its editor-in-chief was Tadeusz Mazowiecki, later the first prime minister of independent Poland.





ST BRIDGET'S CHURCH



The support of the Catholic Church was very important to the workers striking in August 1980. Gdańsk bishop Lech Kaczmarek sent Father Henryk Jankowski, the parish priest of St. Bridget's Church to the striking shipyard workers. He began to celebrate regular mass for the strikers in the Gdańsk Shipyard and himself became one of the heroes of the August Legend.



J.C. Schultz St Bridget's Church in Gdansk, ca. 1856

The role of St Bridget's Church increased when Martial Law was imposed and many of Solidarity's leaders were imprisoned. Right behind the church itself, St Bridget's presbytery became Lech Wałęsa's and the democratic opposition's unofficial office until 1989. Sunday masses were accompanied by patriotic and liberation demonstrations, often with Wałęsa and other Solidarity leaders, who were finally released by the regime. St Bridget's Church would be so packed that it was difficult to get inside. Many times the demonstrations in front of the church would end in clashes with the police who used clubs, water cannons and tear gas to disperse the demonstrators.



Lech Wałęsa and Father Henryk Jankowski during the strike in Gdańsk Shipyard in August 1980.

St Bridget's Church
www.brygida.gdansk.pl
 17 Profesorska St.
 tel. +48 58 301 31 52

St Bridget's Church.

The St Bridget's Church building in Gdańsk has a long and tragic history. It was erected in the late 14th century, but burned down in 1587. Rebuilt with elements of Renaissance architecture, it was almost completely destroyed in the final months of World War II. The church was reconstructed in the 1970s, shortly before the outbreak of the August strike in the Gdańsk Shipyard.

The church's interior is decorated with metalwork illustrating the history of the Polish people's fight for freedom.



Altar in the main nave of St Bridget's Church.



The church's interior.

The construction of an amber altar for St Bridget's Church is an extraordinary, difficult and costly undertaking which has been going on for years. The altar is to be 11 m high and 9 m wide. In its centre is the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Protector of the Workers, painted by Father Franciszek Znaniecki and inspired by his experiences from the workers' massacre of December 1970.

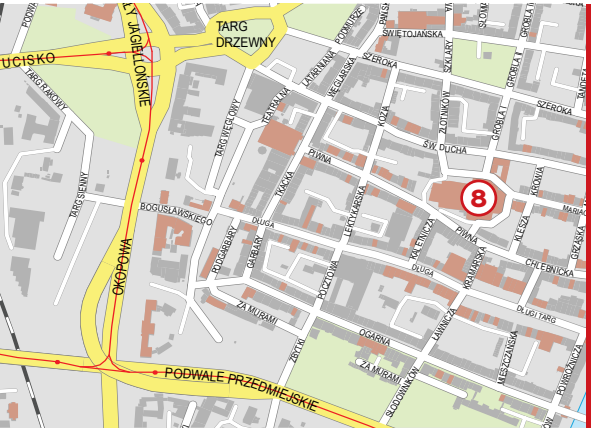
The construction of the altar is co-ordinated by celebrated Gdańsk amber jeweller Mariusz Drapikowski, creator of many works of sacred art, including the famous Jerusalem Triptych made with such materials as amber, gold, silver and titanium.

Amber monstrance designed and made by Mariusz Drapikowski.



8

ST MARY'S CHURCH



Solidarity's struggle also is a part of the history of the most important church in Gdansk – the Gothic St Mary's Church, the largest brick church in the world, built on and off for 159 years from 1343.

St Mary's Church
www.bazylikamariacka.pl
 5 Podkramarska St.
 tel. +48 58 301 39 82

The church was badly damaged towards the end of World War II, just like so many other historical monuments in Gdansk. However, it has been meticulously restored. Inside are many works of sacred art, with an impressive Late Gothic altar. Perhaps St Mary's Church biggest attraction, however, is its 82-metre-high tower, with 402 steps leading to the top. The tower is open to visitors. A beautiful view of Gdansk unfolds from the top of the tower, together with a panorama of the Shipyard.

St Mary's Church has a long tradition in the opposition. Anti-regime marches would set off from the church as early as in the 1970s. When the communist authorities decided to crush the opposition, masses for the Homeland began to be celebrated at St Mary's. The great marches for independence which set off from the church gathered thousands of people.



Detail of one of the storeys of the astronomical clock from the 15th century.



St Mary's Church in the early 20th century.



Panorama of Gdańsk with the largest brick church in the world.

In 1982, the opposition organised May Day celebrations to rival those held by the communists. The regime's march was a failure: only several hundred people came and quickly went home. Meanwhile, Solidarity's supporters came in droves to the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers and marched to mass at St Mary's Church. Then, after leaving the church, they went through Gdańsk's main street where the march was joined by 50,000 people. The crowds of chanting people were so impressive that the police did not dare attack them, even though in other cases they were quite ready to use force.



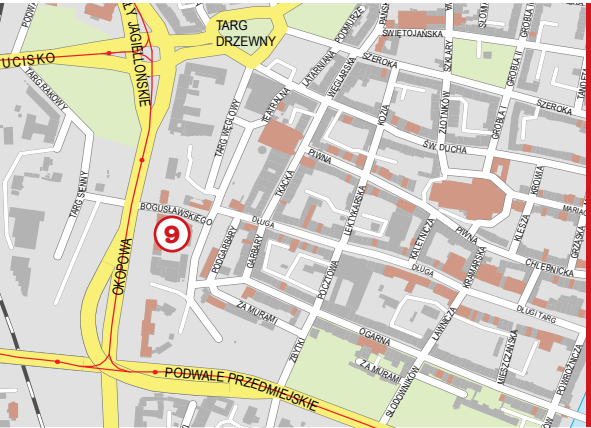
We are in the heart of Gdańsk. So, after you visit the church, you should take a little break and visit a cafe or restaurant. There are plenty of both here.



You can take a rickshaw for the rest of our tour. It's inexpensive and you can get one in Długa St.

9

SECRET POLICE HQ THEIR GOAL: TO DESTROY SOLIDARITY



The Secret Political Police headquarters in Gdańsk was one of the most closely guarded buildings in town. Hundreds of officers worked there whose only duty was to keep the opposition under surveillance and to persecute its members. Their activities were secret and fearsome. However, one Secret Police officer, Major Adam Hodysz furtively went over to the side of the opposition.

In 1978, in this very building, following an interrogation, Major Hodysz came into contact with Aleksander Hall, later one of the heroes of Solidarity. For years, Major Hodysz passed secret information on to the opposition, explained the Secret Police's methods and warned against arrest. Nearby, 500 metres to the north-east, is a jail where many oppositionists and anti-government demonstrators were imprisoned during the communist period. They would often be treated worse than the criminals.

During Martial Law, in July 1982, the Solidarity inmates decided to hold a hunger strike. The guards found out about this thanks to wire taps hidden in the prison cells. They decided to "teach the political prisoners a lesson." 300 policemen armed with clubs and shields dragged the defenceless prisoners out of their cells and brutally force-fed them. Those who put up any resistance were beaten. "It was a bloodbath," recalls a former guard who took part in the operation. "Blood splashed on the floors and walls. You could hear the screams of the beaten all over the prison."

Former Secret Police
Headquarters
9 Okopowa St.

Today, the building houses
the Gdańsk branch office
of the Internal Security Agency.



Police operation in Szeroka St.
in Gdańsk.



Protesting Shipyard workers after
the imposition of Martial Law.

VICTORY ON THE WALLS



The area surrounding the former Secret Police HQ is a dreary place. Today, the local authorities are trying to change this image which is why they have reached out to young artists. And so today you can see murals inspired by August 1980 on the piers of the flyover which rises right next to the former Secret Police HQ.



One of the murals shows the scene of Wałęsa signing the agreement with the government in the BHP Hall. Another shows the strikers as they raise the V-sign for Victory. The underpass nearby has lots of graffiti alluding to the festivals which take place in Gdansk and the construction of the Shakespearean Theatre, which is to stand right behind the former Secret Police HQ. The precursor of this form of artistic expression in Gdansk is Rafał Roskowiński. One of his most famous works which depicts John Paul II and Lech Wałęsa, is in the district of Zaspá.

You can find murals inspired by Gdansk's recent history in many parts of town. Iwona Zając is the artist behind the innovative *Shipyards* project. Over an area of about 250 m, the artist combined her works with a record of quotes from the former workers who took part in the events of August 1980.

August-inspired murals can also be found on the pillars of the overpass in the Green Triangle area (which neighbours the Shipyards). Unfortunately, the mural can be a very ephemeral art form. Some of the murals disappeared together with the walls they were painted on. This is because part of the former Gdansk Shipyards grounds is being turned into a brand-new district, the Young City.



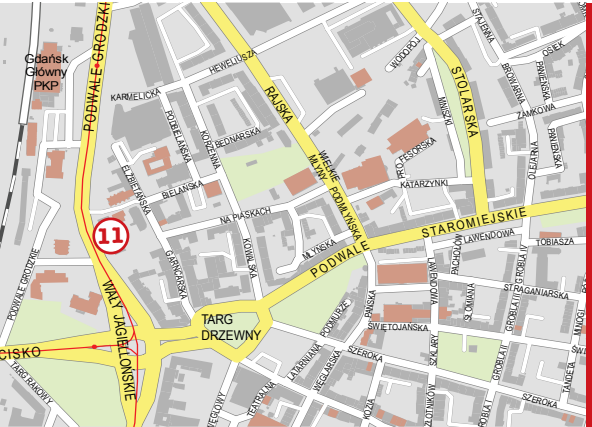
Murals on the Gdansk Shipyards wall.



"I wanted to tell about people, their fears, their needs and dreams," says Iwona Zając. "About life, work, unfulfilled plans. I was lucky that the shipyard workers were willing to share their stories with me. This is my homage to those people and this place."

11

THE COMMUNISTS' "WHITE HOUSE"



This five-storey building was the regional seat of the Polish United Workers' Party until 1990. In spite of its nickname, given by the workers during the strike in August 1980 and a pun on the official residence of the President of the United States, it has a dramatic history.

The former regional headquarters of the Communist Party
36 Wąły Jagiellońskie St.

It was here that the Shipyard workers came in December 1970 to protest against the government's actions. They demanded a repeal of newly announced very high – even 35 % – raises in the prices of food and general goods. They also demanded that the government cut down on exorbitant industrial output standards.

On December 15, 1970 over 3,000 people gathered at the building. One of the Party's secretary's tried to calm the crowd down through a bullhorn, but to no avail. The workers took the bullhorn from him and shouted, "The press is lying," and "Down with the red bourgeoisie!" The revolt began to spread into the neighbouring streets and squares. Sixteen shops were wrecked, 7 cars, 2 trucks and a bus were burnt.

At night, the authorities arrested almost 900 persons. It was to no avail, because almost 20,000 protesters gathered at the "White House" the very next day. The crowd was more and more determined. Young workers got in trucks, accelerated and drove them into the police cordons, jumping out of the cabs at the last moment. Before noon, the rebels broke into the building. They threw portraits of the "fathers of communism," furniture and documents out the windows and set fire to the rooms. The "White House" burned for many hours on all its floors.



A plaque commemorating the events of December 1970 in Gdansk, placed on the wall of the former regional headquarters of the Communist Party in 2005.

The fire consumed the roof, which was high and sloping at the time. Several other public buildings burned. The crowd clashed with the police. The protesters burned or destroyed 35 cars and 54 shops. Above the scene, a helicopter hovered with horrified and furious Party leaders. That night, heavily armed army units equipped with tanks and armoured personnel vehicles were summoned to Gdańsk. The events resulted in the raking of the crowd of workers with machine-gun fire, just as they were to again leave the Shipyard for the city streets in the morning. Two workers were killed on the spot, three more died in hospital, many were badly wounded.

Today, the Gdańsk “White House” is the office of insurance and consultancy companies. The top floors are occupied by the public prosecutor’s office.



Logo of the Polish United Workers' Party.

The five-storey building, which was the headquarters of the regional authorities of the Polish United Workers' Party was burnt on December 15, 1970.





SOLIDARITY BASIN



We are about to end our tour of the history of the victorious struggle of the people of Gdańsk against communism. All that's left is a short walk in the direction of Gdańsk Shipyard to the building of the National Commission of the Solidarity Trade Union. The independent trade union formed thanks to the August Agreements of 1980 had its first headquarters in Wrzeszcz, another part of town.

In the late 1980s, the communist leaders of the Polish People's Republic found that they cannot govern a country with a ruined economy and rebellious population. In June 1989, following several months of negotiations at the Round Table, they agreed to hold the first elections with a limited participation of the opposition in order for Solidarity to take responsibility for the country's situation in parliament. It became apparent that the communists no longer had enough support to remain in control. Free elections were held and the opposition won.

Solidarity Head Office
24 Wąły Piastowskie St.
Today this building houses
the Office of the National
Commission of the Solidarity
Trade Union.



Prime Minister
Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

Police in Waly Piastowskie St.

In this building Lech Wałęsa returned to his role as Chairman of the Solidarity Trade Union. His office was on the 3rd floor above the main entrance. During the communist times, this was an office building for enterprises working in the shipbuilding industry.

The ground floor had a cafeteria and the Akwen (Basin in Polish) Club, which gave the place its name. Shortly after Poland regained its independence, Solidarity staffers discovered that this was a key surveillance point. The building had a large telephone switchboard which the Secret Police used to tap in on the conversations held in Gdańsk Shipyard.



In the Autumn of 1990, Wałęsa was elected president. He awaited the election results with his wife in his union office. When his victory was declared, both of them stepped out on to the balcony to raise a toast. The crowd of Gdańskers standing outside the building exulted in the victory.

At the corner of the Solidarity building are two important monuments. One is a concrete fragment of the Berlin Wall which, since its fall, has become a symbol of European unification. The second is a fragment of the brick wall of Gdańsk Shipyard, which Lech Wałęsa jumped over to lead the August strike. A similar fragment of the Shipyard wall stands in Berlin in front of the Reichstag in memory of the place where it all began.

Here we end our journey along the roads to freedom.

At least 30 years have passed since the events described in this guide. Today, with the benefit of hindsight, we can see more clearly than ever before that the August events in Gdańsk were the proverbial first stone of the avalanche which ultimately lead to the complete transformation of the European continent. Without that impulse, there would be no Autumn of Nations in 1989, the Berlin Wall would not have fallen and the Soviet empire would not have disintegrated.

In was then, in Gdańsk, that a completely new chapter in the history of Europe began. As famous historian Timothy Garton Ash put it: *What we call the Polish August, was the beginning of the end of the short 20th century.*

EPILOGUE

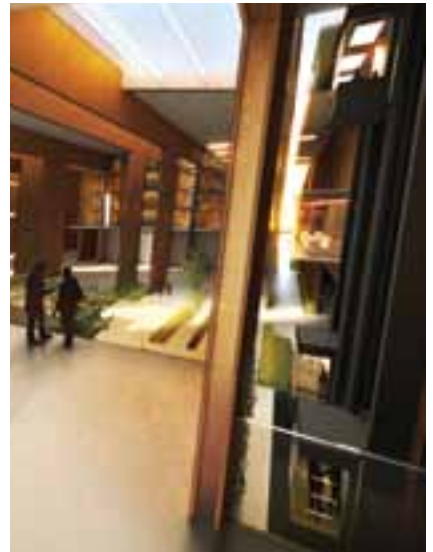


On the 25th anniversary of August 1980 in Gdańsk, upon the initiative of Solidarity's legendary leader Lech Wałęsa, the Founding Act of the European Solidarity Centre was signed. The signatories included the heads of state and government from such countries as the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, the Netherlands, Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Belgium, Sweden, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia, Slovenia and Hungary. The European Solidarity Centre is to be a combination of a research centre and a state-of-the-art museum telling the story of the roads to freedom and the fight against post-World War II totalitarianism not only in Poland, but also in other countries locked behind the Iron Curtain.

Logo of the European Solidarity Centre.



The ESC Building will be built on the site of the former Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk, right behind the legendary Three Crosses, or the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers.





GDAŃSK

www.gdansk.pl

Publisher: City Hall of Gdańsk – Mayor’s Bureau for City Promotion
ul. Nowe Ogrody 8/12, 80-803 Gdańsk
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Design and typesetting: www.yellowfactory.eu

Photography and illustrations: A. Gojke, M. Hasse, G. Klamon, B. Nieznalski,
S. Składanowski, M. Szłaga, Z. Trybek,
T. Wierzejski / www.fotonova.pl,
ESC Archive, collections of the Institute
of National Remembrance (IPN), KFP, Drapikowski Studio,
collection of the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy
of Sciences (PAN), archive of the City Hall of Gdańsk

