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Solidarity 1980–81: The Social Movement for Freedom

The social movement Solidarity (in Polish: *Solidarność*), along with the trade union of the same name, is an instance rarely seen in world history of a self-organizing society bent on toppling a dictatorship. The many people involved in the movement shared the goal of curtailing the absolutist power of the communists and improving the economic and social situation in Poland. The economic and social postulates Solidarity tabled included the legalization of trade unions independent from the state, the guarantee of the right to strike; the raising of wages, and the introduction of three-year maternity leaves. These were entwined with political demands such as adherence to the Constitution and freedom of speech, the press, and publication—as well as the release of political prisoners.

In 1980–81, for the first time in Polish history, a social movement managed to unite so many differing groups and social strata: the workers, peasants, intellectuals, students, civil servants, etc. The main tone was set by workers and representatives of the working class. Their pursuits were actively supported by intellectual and artistic elites and the Catholic Church. The success of Solidarity was therefore made possible owing to the co-operation and solidarity of the breadth of Polish society.

The documents presented here in German are a selection of the most important sources and thereby present the emergence, activity, and liquidation of Solidarity as a result of the imposition of Martial Law on 13 December 1981. These sources are accompanied by scholarly articles detailedly portraying the most significant issues facing the social movement. They are enriched with iconographic material made available by the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk.

Translated from Polish by Philip Steele