

Statement Following a Meeting with Solidarity Movement Representative Jerzy Milewski on the Situation in Poland

October 21, 1985

I had the pleasure today to meet Mr. Jerzy Milewski, the distinguished representative in Brussels of the Polish labor union Solidarity and a close friend of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Lech Walesa. We discussed a subject of great interest to me, the situation in Poland.

I told Mr. Milewski of my high hopes that the amnesty declared in July 1984 would represent a giant step toward national reconciliation. Unfortunately, most of the recent news from Poland has not been good. The number of persons detained for purely political reasons has once again risen sharply. Amendments to the penal code have gone into effect which empower the authorities to make summary judgments on a wide variety of so-called crimes. A new law on higher education impinges severely upon traditional academic freedoms. Amendments to the 1982 trade union law effectively rule out de jure trade union pluralism for the foreseeable future. The parliamentary elections just concluded, and like elections before them, have failed to provide a genuine public mandate for Poland's legislative representatives.

Mr. Milewski and other thoughtful observers of the Polish scene understandably feel deep concern over this trend of events. History proves that increased repression only aggravates current problems and sows the seeds of future discontent. I continue to believe that a genuine dialog between the government and important elements of society, including free and independent trade unions, is the only way to solve Poland's serious problems. The release of political detainees would certainly be a prerequisite, both for improving conditions within Poland and for pursuing that country's relations abroad. Mr. Milewski's work in keeping the Western World abreast of his countrymen's efforts to bring their needs and aspirations to the attention of their government is thus extremely important.

Note: The President met with Mr. Milewski at 11:30 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1985/102185c.htm>