

# Statement on the Second Anniversary of Solidarity

November 10, 1982

Today marks the second anniversary of an important milestone in mankind's age-long struggle for freedom. In November 1980, for the first time since 1917, a Communist government was compelled to grant formal recognition to a free trade union, Solidarity. This unprecedented step was brought about by a nonviolent revolution of millions of Polish workers who could no longer tolerate coercion and mismanagement.

Many hoped that this event would open a new chapter in the evolution of Communist regimes; that it demonstrated they have finally recognized there are limits to the use of force against one's own people and that cooperation is preferable to repression. Unfortunately, as we now know, the official recognition of Solidarity 2 years ago was merely a tactical move to gain time on the part of the panic-stricken Communist authorities.

The Polish Government, working hand in glove with Moscow, persistently refused to implement the terms of the November 10, 1980 accords. Instead, it did everything it could to discredit the union by a campaign of slander and provocation. The campaign failed to achieve its objectives. Finally, in desperation and under intense Soviet pressure, Poland's authorities moved to liquidate Solidarity, whose ideal of worker self-determination jeopardized all Communist regimes.

It is said that by declaring war on its own people, the Polish Government has destroyed Solidarity. This is not so. One can imprison protesters, club and disperse demonstrators with tear gas or water cannons, but the specter remains: Never again will the self-appointed representatives of the workers be able to pretend that they represent anyone but themselves.

Our hearts go out to the brave Polish people. By struggling for freedom and social justice against overwhelming odds, they fight for a cause all humanity shares with them.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/111082c.htm>