

Statement on the Situation in Poland

May 1, 1982

May 1 is celebrated as Labor Day in many parts of the world. Although this celebration originated in the United States, recently the Communist world has paid it special attention. This takes on ironic significance in the wake of the brutal actions by Polish authorities to crush Solidarity, the only free trade union in a Communist country.

Poland is no longer on the front pages every day, but we must not allow her people to be forgotten. We must continue to honor the unbroken spirit of the Polish people and to call upon Poland's leaders to recognize their commitments. The Polish leaders must take positive action if there is to be hope for either economic recovery or a healing of the hatred and bitterness that the political repression has generated.

On December 23, we imposed a broad range of economic sanctions against Warsaw in response to the government's declaration of martial law. We made it clear that these sanctions are reversible if and when Polish authorities restore the internationally recognized human rights of the Polish people. When that happens, we stand ready to provide assistance to help in Poland's economic recovery.

The actions taken earlier this week by the Polish Government are a welcome step in the right direction but are not enough. By their own count over 2,000 citizens, including Lech Walesa, are still imprisoned. I would like to lift our sanctions and help Poland, but not until the Polish Government has ended martial law, released the detainees, and reopened a genuine dialog with Solidarity, led by Lech Walesa.

So on this day, Law Day in the United States, when we commemorate our principles of liberty and individual rights, we reflect upon the Polish people's lack of such freedoms and upon their struggle to gain them.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/50182a.htm>