

## **XII National Session of Delegates of NSZZ Solidarnosc Gdańsk, 30 August 2000**

On 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of August NSZZ Solidarnosc celebrated its XX Anniversary. The culminating point of the celebration was the Solemn Session of General Assembly of Delegates. The Assembly was attended not only by delegates elected for the current term of office of the Congress but also members of past National Commissions since 1980 and advisers from the early days of Solidarnosc were present. Speeches were delivered among others by the first President of NSZZ Solidarnosc - Lech Wałęsa, the first non-communist Prime Minister of Poland - Tadeusz Mazowiecki, former General Secretary of CFDT (the first foreign trade union confederation which visited Gdańsk Shipyard) - Edmond Maire, Prime Minister - Jerzy Buzek and of course, President of NSZZ Solidarnosc – Marian Krzaklewski. About hundred international guests attended the celebration, including Bill Jordan – General Secretary of the ICFTU, Willy Thys – General Secretary of the WCL, Emilio Gabaglio – General Secretary of the ETUC, John Vanderveken – former General Secretary of the ICFTU, Jan Kułakowski – former General Secretary of the WCL, Willy Peirens – former President of the WCL, Ernst Breit – former President of the ETUC, Norman Willis – former President of the ETUC.

Below you will find a couple of documents adopted by the General Assembly of Delegates.

### **WORDS OF GRATITUDE TO OUR FOREIGN FRIENDS**

On this solemn day of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarność" we convey our special words of gratitude to our friends from the free world, without whose moral and financial support it would be difficult to survive the days of the martial law. Their assistance was the basis for survival for numerous families of the persecuted activists of the Union. There were always people willing to smuggle priceless duplicating machines, paper, and printer's ink. Their presence in Poland at that time, the testimony of the free world supported our will of resistance and added strength at the moments of despair.

Your sacrifice and aid helped us to gain our victory. This puts an obligation upon us to support those, who need help now. On this festive day we want to promise solemnly that NSZZ "Solidarność" will never stop this kind of activity.

### **MESSAGE TO THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD**

On this solemn day of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NSZZ "Solidarność" birth we speak with pride and joy: the dreams which emerged in our hearts on August days back in 1980 came true. We successfully won the right to voice our convictions, to recognise the truth, and to defend the worker's dignity. We have our independent and self-governing trade union, which gives Polish workers a chance of meeting their aspirations; a trade union that guards respecting worker's and union's rights.

Meeting our aspirations was possible thanks to devotion and determination of working people in Poland, struggling without violence for their rights, but also thanks to the aid we received in the time of the military administration from independent trade unions and other democratic organisations all over the world. Today, free trade

unions operate in all European countries. Poland and other Central and East European countries are independent: our continent is an area nearly completely free of totalitarianism, a shameful symbol of divisions, i.e. the Berlin Wall, was dismantled.

However, not all divisions have disappeared – new, economic and social ones, resulting from the lack of solidarity, have been created. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing, many millions remain without job, shelter; they starve and live without access to fundamental achievements of civilisation.

Therefore, proud as we are of our achievements, we shall not forget the problems and challenges facing “Solidarność” and the world trade union movement. Thus we appeal for joint and several actions of the international trade movement for respecting human, worker, and trade union rights, liquidation of forced and child labour, restricting shadow zone, respecting the social dimension in international trade and investments so that they could contribute to sustainable economic development and creation of new jobs in view of full employment.

We shall always oppose global capital in its attempts to maximise its profits through the reductions in employment, low wages, neglecting the health and safety, and environment protection standards. We shall combat the systematic fight against independent trade unions carried out by multinationals and authoritarian regimes only in order to exploit workers below any standard. Thus, it is our trade union solidarity that any persecution of even one employee shall be treated by us as a challenge to the world’s trade union movement as a whole.

It is our obligation to support the authentic, independent, democratic trade unions, and to assist all those employees who want to organise such unions, often risking their own safety, if not their lives. Therefore we appeal to the international trade union movement to take up all the possible effort in defence of the common right cause.

Polish workers won in 1980 thanks to their general mobilisation and unity of actions. So we repeat the appeal of the 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress of Delegates of NSZZ “Solidarność” for the unity of the international trade union movement. We are convinced that unification within the framework of a single international confederation of all the independent, democratic, and representative trade unions that cherish the values the Polish workers found so important 20 years ago, will contribute to the higher efficiency of trade union actions, and will enable us to achieve, jointly and severally, our goals to the benefit of workers all over the world.

### **Tribute to all the Nameless Heroes of NSZZ “Solidarność”**

On the solemn day of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of NSZZ “Solidarność” it is our duty to express our gratitude and respect to thousands of nameless heroes of “Solidarność”. It is due to their sacrifices that we have regained freedom. They contributed to the big transformation which changed our country and showed other nations a way to their own freedom.

Thanks to hundreds of colporteurs and printers free word could overcome the cordons of censorship. It is difficult today to find again all these hospitable people, opening their doors for conspirative meetings. There were many people who shared the goods they did not have in abundance themselves with the oppressed

'Solidarność" activists, and their families, simply sending food or accepting children of the detained at their own homes. We remember them all with our gratitude and respect.

We are aware that numerous manifestations and strikes were successful thanks to the determination of people faithful to the ideals of Polish August. Solidarity with "Solidarność" in the 1980s could mean risking your life, health, freedom, job, property, and peace of your family. It was a noble and heroic choice. The risk was even greater, when a person engaged the opposition activities was unknown to the public opinion. Therefore our respect for the nameless heroes is even higher.

Your efforts brought the effects: our Homeland has been enjoying its economic and social development for many years. We are sorry that it is not each of you, our dearest friends, who enjoy the benefits of the changes, feeling disappointed and bitter. Your efforts and sacrifice have not always been rewarded.

So, on the day of our common anniversary we want solemnly promise you that the Union will never stop its efforts to ensure the welfare of the just and safe Poland, free thanks to the efforts of the millions who founded twenty years ago the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarność".